



GEORGE H. W. BUSH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH CHASE UNTERMAYER

College Station, TX
July 27-28, 2000

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Young: There are a few routines I have to get out of the way on tape. The first is to go around the table, and for purposes of voice identification so that it becomes easier when the tape is transcribed to identify the voices. The note takers are helping with this also. So, Chase, you've already said a few words but let the tape know who was saying them.

Untermeyer: I'm Chase Untermeyer, former Director of Presidential Personnel in the Bush White House.

Milkis: Sid Milkis.

Edwards: George Edwards.

McCall: James McCall.

Karaagac: John Karaagac.

Holzweiss: Robert Holzweiss.

Lee: Beatriz Lee.

Young: And Jim Young. Let me remind everybody of the ground rules, or the policies and procedures that require us all to hold this interview, what's said here, in confidence. The transcripts go to Chase and when they do he will have the opportunity to review them, correct them, edit them to his satisfaction, and set whatever terms or restrictions you think are appropriate before they may be disclosed to anyone else. We do this as a matter of routine to encourage people to speak to history candidly and we do not pry or gossip. We're trying to get a real picture through the memories, a picture of this administration. So, let's proceed and start with the beginning, or take us through your relationship with George Bush.

Untermeyer: I first became associated with George Bush in 1966 when he was a candidate for Congress in the new 7th Congressional District on the west side of Houston. I'd been involved in politics as a volunteer going back to junior high school days, literally the spring of 1961 when John Tower was elected to the U.S. Senate from Texas, not only the first Republican elected from Texas but, I believe, the first Republican elected from the former Confederacy to the U.S.

Senate since reconstruction. So my interest in practical politics, beyond just schoolboy campus politics, had been well established.

But, with the exception of John Tower, almost no one I worked for ever got elected to anything. Such was the state of the Republican Party in the early '60s. And, in fact, George Bush might not have gotten elected if it hadn't been for the fact that redistricting of Congressional and legislative districts for that matter became required in the mid 1960s as a result of federal court action. The legislature, which was totally Democratic, with reluctance, created a Congressional district on the west side of Houston. You might want to check that; it might have even been a federal court order since the courts have gone into redistricting as much as legislative bodies have. In any event, it was a very winnable district for a Republican, and George Bush having been the Senate candidate in 1964 was very well known, very attractive; he had many, many friends and volunteers.

Everything was in place for him to win except he had a very strong opponent, a man named Frank Briscoe from an old Texas family, who was the district attorney in Harris County. Briscoe was a classic conservative Democrat in that his political philosophy was indistinguishable from a Republican and merely being a Democrat, having that title, gave him such a major inside track on contributions, votes, and endorsements by entities such as the *Houston Chronicle*, the *Houston Post*, etc. Frank Briscoe was therefore a very tough opponent for Bush. The fact that Bush won speaks to his campaigning ability and that of his team, to the growing and now almost paramount power of the Republican Party on the west side of Houston and also to the fact that Briscoe was not as strong a campaigner, as it turned out, as was Bush and made many mistakes during the course of that campaign. Wonderful anecdote from that period was that Briscoe, whose forebear had fought alongside Sam Houston in the battle of San Jacinto and were a great Texas family for well over a hundred years, said that Bush could not possibly represent Texas in Congress because he had only lived in the state for eighteen years [*laughter*] instead of himself, where he came from many generations. Bush said in the debate or in response to a question that Briscoe was right, that he had not been born in Texas, he had been born in Massachusetts, but that he felt that at a time like that he should be with his mother. [*laughter*]

So I was soon drawn to him as a candidate for Congress. I was then a college student and wanted to get involved in politics. As I said, I'd been involved in campaigns before. As early as 1965, I was among those who encouraged George Bush to consider running for that new district. Now, I was an anonymous college student. I wrote him a letter, which I'm pleased to see wound up in his book, *All the Best*. And I might make a mention here that a lot of what was in that book and other things came from the sad fact that President Bush, or then Congressman Bush, after being defeated for the Senate in 1970, gave orders to his staff to throw away all of his Congressional papers. So that the record of those years is sadly nonexistent except for whatever people like myself may have had in their own files, so—

Young: Why would he do that, do you think?

Untermeyer: I believe he thought it was a bother to gather and ship and store all that sort of thing. I don't know, I guess he was pretty well depressed too by the results. There was no organization, and for all I know universities weren't in the business in those days of wanting

people's papers, and so they all went. And it's a great, great loss. For that reason, I think he now is such a believer in keeping things, and we sit in proof of the fact that not only does he think differently but the American government thinks differently too.

In any event, I offered to work in his campaign and in the summer of 1966, which was between my sophomore and junior years at college, I came back to Houston from some summer training with the Navy and went to work volunteering in his campaign headquarters on Richmond Avenue in Houston. I did basic campaign work of the sort that the computer seems to have replaced, such as addressing envelopes and helping with chores around the headquarters, but what I really wanted to do was to do some research. That was what college students did in campaigns, at least the sort of work I wanted to do.

I got in touch with the lawyer, a fellow named Bill Cassin, who was the head of the research committee for Bush and offered to do whatever it might take, and he gave me an assignment which was to do a biography of the opponent, Frank Briscoe, not the sort of opposition research by that title today, trying to find scandalous things, that wasn't my instruction. But merely to see what was on the public record. So I remember spending several days in the morgue, the library of the *Houston Chronicle*. I can still smell the clippings at the time I went through. Essentially piecing together what was known to the public about Frank Briscoe: his becoming district attorney, the murder trials and other cases that he prosecuted, and put it together in a report, which was sent back to Bill Cassin before the Labor Day holiday in 1966.

When I came back home after being in the Texas hill country with some friends, my parents and sister were all excited because George Bush had called. He had read this report and wanted me to come work for him in his personal office on such research matters as he needed in preparation for speeches. Well, that was terrific. I had a chance then to meet him in his office at the Houston Club building. He maintained a personal office, his business office downtown, even though the campaign office was elsewhere. During that period, which was only a couple of weeks as I remember, before I had to leave to go back to school, I went through stacks of material that he had received from the Republican National Committee, or the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee, if it existed by that name in that period, of useful facts for all Republican candidates running in 1966. I put them together, as I recall, on index cards, as quotations, useful factoids for him to use in speeches, and I think I may have done one or two other chores while I was working there, but essentially it was to give him those cards for use in speeches.

Somewhere in the files, I'm happy to say, is an article which he or Aleene Smith, who was his personal secretary then and later in government, had sent me in which the *Houston Post* or *Houston Chronicle* reported on a debate against Briscoe and quoting one of these facts. So I was glad to see it had practical value. In that process I had a chance therefore to get to know him and for him to like my particular work. I should say that I had met him—literally a handshake in a receiving line—three years earlier in October 1963, at the time that he was the Republican County Chairman in Harris County. I'd read in the newspaper that there was a Young Republican reception for Senator Peter Dominick who was Republican in Colorado, had a background somewhat similar to Bush's in that he came from a prominent East Coast family connected with stock brokering, gone to Yale I believe, been a flyer during World War II, although I think it was the Army Air Corps, became a U.S. Senator from Colorado in the early

'60s. It wasn't very often that Republican elected officials came to Houston in those days, so I clearly wanted to see Dominick and went to this reception held in a hotel, as I recall, on the outskirts of downtown Houston, and there was the county chairman to introduce Senator Dominick. That's the first time I ever shook hands with George Bush, but there was no conversation other than the few words you mumble in a receiving line. He was to resign not too long thereafter to begin his own unsuccessful race for the U.S. Senate.

In any event, during the course of the '66 campaign, so typical of George Bush, even though he was a candidate doing all the things he was and I was just this college student, I would receive mailings from him, either directly from him or through Aleene Smith, of clippings, other information, bits of information about how the campaign was going. And after the election, which he won, part of a general Republican surge back from the Goldwater disaster of two years earlier, I wrote him a congratulatory letter and he wrote back saying that, words to the effect that there would be internship programs available on the Hill and he would welcome my having one of those. Well, it was the greatest news of my life when that happened, because of my regard for him and excitement over his being in Congress, and whatever political future he might have from that point, plus the fact, just being in Washington, going to work on Capitol Hill was a great excitement.

As it proved: not only was I an intern for at least the early part of the summer of 1967, but I would also go down to Washington from Cambridge whenever an occasion presented itself, like spring break or the semester break, in order to just do volunteer work around the office. And that's all it was, basic sort of paper handling, paper moving that goes on in a Congressional office, answering mail, doing some research on legislation or whatnot. I first got to know Rose Zamaria at that point. She was the administrative assistant, the office manager for Congressman Bush as she had been for the late Congressman Albert Thomas, a Democrat, whom Bush inherited from Mrs. [Lera Millard] Thomas when Mrs. Thomas briefly succeeded her husband in the Congress. Rose taught me the virtues of a good letter; a good letter being one that answers the mail literally, that speaks to the issue that the person wrote about and didn't lose it in all sorts of verbiage of the sort that is so typical about a government letter. I owe Rose a great deal of credit about getting to the point, writing a clear, concise, responsive letter, which of course is the hallmark I might add of what George Bush has always wanted in his correspondence.

Young: Could I interject? Did you, I don't know whether you were thinking about this, but did you sense that when you were working with Bush as an intern, or even earlier, that here was a man who had his eyes on a higher political career? That he was thinking about going on to higher office? That that was where his ambitions focused? His plans?

Untermeyer: Very definitely. For one thing, of course, he had run for the Senate already, and it was pretty well assumed, indeed, that he would run again in 1970, against Ralph Yarborough, with great prospects of winning because of general reaction against Democrats in particular and the surge of the Republican Party in Texas. Because Yarborough was liberal, who was distrusted, even hated, by a lot of conservative Democrats. All sorts of stars and planets were lining up to see him elected to the Senate in 1970. That didn't help him in '64 when he was pretty well weighted down by Barry Goldwater being at the top of the ticket. In fact, I think Bush ran several hundred thousand votes ahead of Goldwater in that race. So it was clear he was headed in that

direction, that he was not just because he was a prospective U.S. Senate candidate, but as a star of the very large and very talented Republican class of 1966. I remember, as an intern in the summer of '67, being regarded with envy by my colleagues, other interns, because I was associated with this comer, this star. The other star of the class of '66 whose intern we also envied was Donald Riegle, as I recall, who was elected at a very young age, about twenty-eight, to Congress from Flint, Michigan, and who also was seen as having a brilliant future. Riegle later did become a Senator, but a Democrat. He switched parties. And had a strange career that certainly did not fulfill a promise that a lot of us felt at that particular time.

I don't want to go into too much more than you want me to about the Bush Congressional office, which I only saw in bits and pieces but which was a wonderful experience for me personally, a great chance to see how he acted on particular issues, and I did have a chance to get involved on certain issues that interested him.

Most interesting, in the context of more modern politics, was his desire to take on, as a Congressional specialty, population control, international population control. Now, his literal specialty was the work of the Ways and Means Committee, which he was able to join as a freshman, a very great rarity. But he felt that he should have some kind of issue beyond that, and interestingly, he chose that. He felt that it, population control, had an answer to world problems, particularly world poverty, and that it was something in which the United States should be very active, promoting international family planning.

This all became something of an issue with Planned Parenthood many years later when he, in 1980, changed his position on abortion to conform to that of the Republican ticket, and Ronald Reagan in particular, as he had to, as the Vice Presidential nominee, and I always detected less sense of outrage than of disappointment in the statements and publications of Planned Parenthood, who viewed him as a great asset circa 1967, '68. So I did a lot of research on those issues, talking, calling up officials at AID [Agency for International Development] or other federal agencies dealing with foreign aid and the general question such that Aleene Smith, who had become Congressman Bush's chief secretary in his office in Washington, began referring to me as "Pop," for population control. In some of the correspondence you can see me referred to by her in that way. I don't know that she must have been aware that that was also George Bush's nickname, but I think that's a pure coincidence as it turned out.

Another thing, a couple of things I can mention of my own involvement in his Congressional life was that there was a debate one time, I think it was toward the end of my internship in 1967 when—no it could have been a year later, when I was doing similar work—when there was an amendment to particular bill to increase funds for bilingual education. I wrote up a statement, maybe it was a briefing, or it could have been a statement for the press, whatever it was, it was a statement in which he embraced the idea of bilingual education. And, to the great thrill of a college intern, I learned when I came back to work the next day that in the debate the previous evening, which I hadn't seen, that he had the opportunity to get on the floor and to read my words and to see my words, his words in the *Congressional Directory* the next day was like an author whose play is produced to have that happen.

Milkis: It made your day?

Untermeyer: Yes, that's right, it was definitely a ghostwriter for the first time. I might add the amendment failed, failed narrowly, but it was a good thing, probably a very good thing for a prospective Senate candidate in Texas to be associated with.

The other item that I'm pleased about, and in fact this was in the book *All the Best*, was that in the spring of 1968 and I think it was literally April 4, the day that Martin Luther King was assassinated, although at the time I didn't know it, I was finishing up spring break week in Washington in his office and about to leave to go up to New York and eventually back to Cambridge. I wrote a memo urging him to vote for the Open Housing Bill, which was the civil rights bill of that particular period. For crazy reasons, considering that I am a paper packrat, I never made a copy of this. This was back in the days where Xeroxing was still somewhat restricted and new and I had to use carbon copy. And for some reason I just did not slip a carbon into the typewriter when I wrote this. So, I did not keep a copy of my words.

A few years later, many years later, but a few years ago, when I found the response, which Congressman Bush wrote, I wanted to ask the library here for the original, and that's when I learned what I mentioned a while back, that sorry, all Congressional papers were tossed away or burned, so that whatever I wrote was lost. But his response, which is in the book, was very forthright in dealing with the points I raised and saying that he was inclined to vote for the bill, as he eventually did, which was probably the most dramatic incident of his period in Congress. And he said, very graciously, that "your memo helped me decide." Well, again, for a college student, an intern, that was big stuff, and I'm very glad.

Milkis: I was just going to ask you if you could tell us a little about what you said in the memo, what kind of arguments were you making. Did you make an argument that the Republican Party should be strong on civil rights?

Untermeyer: I'm sorry to say I do not remember my arguments, although I tend to believe what I said was that it was the right thing to do. I recognized that it may only be of a symbolic importance, but that it was an important thing for the country to do and for him to be associated with. As I recall, his letter back to me acknowledged the symbolism of the vote and therefore possibly the futility of thinking that this was going to solve problems for poor people, blacks in particular, but that it was still the right thing to do. I regret to say that without the document, I can't quite say what I put into that. So that's pretty much all I can say about the period of dealing with him in Congress.

We can go a little bit faster when I say that in the years to follow, when I served in active duty in the Navy, did some world travel and came back to the United States in 1971, I maintained correspondence with him as is his wont to maintain correspondence with a lot of people. I was disappointed, of course, that he was defeated for the Senate in 1970. I heard that news when I was in Indonesia, and at some point, later on down the line, read that he had been named Ambassador to the United Nations, so that when I passed through New York, upon return to the United States in November 1971, I was able to visit him and Mrs. [Barbara] Bush, saw him at the UN, visited her at their suite in the Waldorf Towers.

Young: So, I gathered, excuse me for interrupting, but, so you weren't in a position to have any knowledge or any insight on Bush's own reaction to that defeat and what he thought about his political future.

Untermeyer: Sorry—

Young: Because by the time you came back he was already back into public office.

Untermeyer: The next phase of his life, which was pretty new. I've often mentioned that as an example of how, in George Bush's life, things that at the time seemed like a bad hand or a bad treatment by Presidents of the day worked to his immense advantage. As of 1970, his defeat for the Senate, he had been on the Ways and Means Committee. He was interested in tax policy, the economy in general, he had majored in economics. So he had hopes of becoming, as I recall, Deputy Secretary of the Treasury. In fact, [Richard] Nixon at the time was talking of redoing the Cabinet, of creating super Cabinet departments, and the Secretary of the Treasury would have taken on immense greater importance perhaps encompassing the Department of Commerce and one or two other Cabinet departments and independent agencies, so that it was going to be a much bigger deal.

But that didn't happen. The reorganization didn't happen and, of all things, I'm not sure how realistic, you all may know better than I, how realistic his chances were of being named Secretary of the Treasury as a defeated two-term Congressman, but of all things, the man named to that position was John Connally, the man who had been in effect calling the shots for Lloyd Bentsen in the campaign against Bush. But Richard Nixon had a love affair, a political love affair with John Connally and as such wanted him to be part of his administration. And, as we now know, very much wanted him to be his successor, couldn't pull that off, and Connally himself couldn't pull it off, but, at the time, that was seen as something of a blow to Bush, that he was not only not chosen for responsibility at the Treasury Department, but that his great, how to say, antagonist, had been chosen instead.

So the United Nations came along as sort of a throwaway item. Everybody knew at the time and Bush's experience at the UN I think proved the fact that Henry Kissinger didn't need an Ambassador at the United Nations very much; they just wanted somebody to go sit in the chair and say what the State Department wanted. Nevertheless, oh, and those of us who were Bush supporters from Texas felt that this was the end. That is, how could he ever hope to run again for public office when he was at the United Nations, one of the least popular entities in Texas, and definitely a sideshow. But, it has now become very clear, that this was the beginning of Bush's interest in and knowledge of foreign affairs, the birth of his belief in personal diplomacy, of getting to know individuals on a personal basis and using a sort of active form of diplomacy. Many of his former colleagues at the United Nations became Foreign Ministers and Prime Ministers such that it was for him a very enriching experience, even if it was a very frustrating one, given Kissinger's attitudes and the public slights and insults that he had to endure in that particular role.

Now, to say again, I was not at the United Nations. I was not present at this time. If you want details of that, Peter Roussel is definitely the one to consult because he was Bush's press

secretary at the UN as he had been in Congress. But I mention all this just because keeping in touch with Bush, and the correspondence and visits, as time passed was something I would do. When he went to the Republican National Committee, another “loser job” in my opinion at the time, I would visit him there. I say it’s a loser job because being the chairman of the Republican National Committee during Watergate was about the least rewarding of all jobs at the time. Yet, in various interviews I’ve always mentioned that if I had to choose one thing in George Bush’s public life prior to his becoming Vice President and President, which led to his being in the White House, it would be that he was Chairman of the Republican National Committee during Watergate. Because that’s where he got to know party regulars in a very great time of depression. His optimistic spirit, his willingness to come to speak to the Lincoln Day dinner and say that the party was not involved with Watergate, the party would revive and that a brighter day existed ahead, even though it was a pretty disastrous election in 1974, immediately after he left that job, I’ve got to believe is what created the degree of loyalty, or at least tolerance, on the part of the conservative leadership of the Republican Party as he then later sought higher office.

Young: In both of these positions, under Kissinger’s shadow, then under the shadow of Watergate, you’re suggesting, it seems, that what Bush was doing here, perhaps all he could do, but he was beginning to work personal relationships, to get to know people, to build networks of acquaintances and to establish a style, personal diplomacy or personal acquaintances that would be very much to his advantage in becoming President and in being President.

Untermeyer: I’m sorry, I forgot to mention that his personal engagement with his colleagues in the Congress was of immense political value later on in that, which overcame divisions of ideology or party.

Young: Was [Gillespie V.] Montgomery there?

Untermeyer: Yes, Sonny Montgomery was elected in 1966 as a Democrat, but their friendship was very strong. His other great friendship in the class of ’66, among many, was Bill Steiger of Wisconsin, a Republican, who died prematurely but who had an immense political future of his own and would clearly have been a major Bush friend or Cabinet member, who knows what, in later years. Janet Steiger, his widow, did become chairman of the Federal Trade Commission under President Bush and, because of his regard for her, but also because of his regard for Bill Steiger.

Milkis: Yes.

Untermeyer: There were many other friendships, some of them later went to the Senate. Bill Roth of Delaware was one. Jim McClure of Idaho was another. I may be forgetting one or two other people from his class who went onward.

McCall: What about people like [Daniel] Rostenkowski and others who held senior leadership positions during the time of the administration?

Untermeyer: Yes, I think Rostenkowski was elected to Congress before Bush, but he certainly got to know him on the Ways and Means Committee. This was the era of the great Wilbur Mills

who, according to other testifiers such as Bush's successor in Congress, Bill Archer, was very gracious to the Republican minority, which I'm not sure Rostenkowski himself was, but he did allow junior members of the minority to ask questions and to engage in the work of the committee. So there was no partisan divide, and across the partisan divide, somebody as interested in others and eager to make friends as was George Bush would meet someone like Dan Rostenkowski who was a great ebullient character on his own, and their friendship did continue on through Bush's days as President. I'm not sure it made any difference in legislation, but at least it made for cheerier relations on the Hill.

Edwards: Let me follow up on a point that Jim was trying to get at. We know that George Bush is famous for developing personal relations. He's a very personable fellow. The question is, do you think these were motivated by a strategic sense of future use? Future gain? Political gain? Or did it just develop out of the natural way that George Bush is and because of that natural approach to personal relationships he was able to call on them when needed years later?

Untermeyer: I'd say both. That he is by nature, not only friendly, I think he truly craves companionship and friendships, and it often seemed to me that George Bush is at his unhappiest when he is alone, or without that kind of contact, in which case he's just as often as not to call people to come and have lunch, dinner, or spend the weekend or some such thing. So he definitely thrives on friendships and knowing people, but, being a politician, he knew that there was a value to be served and there were in the personal notes and contacts such that my little experience was multiplied probably into the hundreds or even thousands over the course of a public life. With people who were his peers, his colleagues in the Congress, then that would take on a deeper cast and maybe lead to important things later on in politics, but, I think he viewed, for their own sake, as proven by the fact those friendships endure now when politics is not a question.

I realize once again we may be bogging down in history that I myself didn't observe, but just to say that I kept up relationships with Bush when he went to China. I was invited by the Bushes to go to China, which would have been a very exciting thing, but they didn't stay long enough for me to be able to take advantage of that opportunity. In those days, China was more like the dark side of the moon than a country, because it was so isolated and American contacts had been not only so negligible but so impossible in an atmosphere of great hostility that I recall receiving a letter back from Bush in the summer of 1975 when he was chief of the U.S. mission in Beijing, or Peking as they said in those days, and as the letter said, and this sounds silly today, but I actually gave the envelope to a friend as a valuable item. I said, "Here is an envelope from China." And the friend received it as such. This was a very unusual thing, and to have gone to China in 1975 to be their guest, which Gregg Petersmeyer, among other people, did get to do, would have been wonderful, but it was not possible. I did get to go with them a couple of years later, which I may mention in a moment, but not on that occasion.

When he came back to head the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], I saw him once, which was right after the 1976 election. Jimmy Carter had, just about that time—and I'm sorry to say I can't quite remember when it was, but it was about Thanksgiving time of 1976—had decided not to retain Bush as director of CIA. There was some thought that he might do that as a bipartisan gesture, and I think Bush very much wanted to stay. It was the sort of experience he found very

thrilling, very fulfilling. He was committed to the mission of the agency, and the agency certainly responded to him. But such was not to be. He was told by Jimmy Carter, just about the time that I happened to visit him, that that wouldn't happen. And I seem to remember his being very saddened and let down about that.

Once again, the hand of fate intervened to help him because had he been retained by Jimmy Carter as director of CIA, he would have been totally poisoned among the Republican Party as Elliot Richardson was, who stayed on to be ambassador-at-large for Law of the Sea, as I recall, for Jimmy Carter, and who never again was allowed to have significant public office because he had been so anathematized by throwing his lot in with the devil. Bush would have suffered that fate. And, of course, the fact that he was out of office planted in him, or allowed him, to seek the Presidency on his own.

As of that visit, when I visited, saw the Bushes and they lent me, incidentally, Marvin's ratty car to go down to Charlottesville where I visited a friend who was in law school there, on that ride, in that unheated Gremlin, to and from Charlottesville the idea came to me—

Young: Gremlin? That's an automobile made by the Nash company. [*laughter*]

Untermeyer: This one also was purple as I recall. But anyway, on that ride down to Charlottesville, it suddenly struck me that what George Bush needed to do was to write a book about his experiences over the preceding decade and to talk about the lessons learned in a rich variety of public offices that I felt could certainly prepare him for future office such as Secretary of State in a subsequent Republican administration. It never occurred to me that he would seek the Presidency or serve in the White House, but the book would be a good project and it would also be very good for me personally. I had just been elected to the Texas House of Representatives. The pay of a Texas legislator then, as now, is \$600 a month. I would have to supplement that income somehow. I had been a journalist, so a writing project seemed to be a good thing, so I wrote a letter, when I got back to Houston, thanking them, for their hospitality and the use of the car and suggesting what he needed to do is to write a book, and I offered myself as ghost writer.

There was no response, as I recall, for a while other than acknowledging the letter, but on about April of 1977, as I recall, I received a call from his office in Houston, inviting me to lunch at the Houston Club, a lunch attended incidentally by George W. Bush, and at that point, Bush senior raised the issue of working on this book project. He'd begun to think that maybe this would be a good thing to do.

Now, I was not aware that he was thinking of running for President and writing a book was what Presidential candidates as a rule did and this might be, to him, part of that process. For me, great, thrilling thing to do to work with him, to look at those documents, to put together a story like that, and to have an income. In the way that George Bush's friendships and contacts work, getting a publisher was no problem. He got in touch with his friend Nelson Doubleday, of the family that owned Doubleday, and the contract was arranged, and we went to New York and talked to Doubleday and talked to a literary agent. I talked to a few other people who were

interested in this general project and the Bush book, the autobiography with me as ghostwriter, had its origins.

This led to my going, in August of 1977, to Kennebunkport for two weeks to interview him on his experiences. As those who have gone through the oral history project know, President Bush has a very short-term memory and is not a very easy bit of interviewing just because all the details were flushed out of his memory or he just, because I'm convinced he is not a man who dwells in the past, all the sort of things that a book writer or an autobiographer would want to put in pages were a little hard to get from him.

Mrs. Bush was able to recall much better. For example, we were talking, in the summer of 1977. It was only two years after, three years after the resignation of Nixon, the Presidency of Gerald Ford, and the meeting that occurred wherein Bush asked to go to China. So the natural question is, why did you want to go to China? Because Ford reportedly was willing to make him Ambassador to Britain or France just as easily. That, of course, proved to be a great experience for the Bushes, but on that occasion only three years after it happened, he wasn't quite able to tell me why he wanted to go to China, other than it was an important place. But what caused him to want to go there, which was a very bold, original thought for its time, especially considering that his experience to date was one of those typical facts that was hard to pull out.

Nevertheless, wonderful interview, wonderful time to be there in Maine and, best of all, was the fact that I got a call, in fact it was before leaving for Maine, from him, with the most astonishing offer of all, and that was that the Chinese government had, upon his departure from Beijing in 1975 to go head the CIA, had offered to give him the complimentary trip around the country, which they did as a rule for departing diplomats. Diplomats in China of that day were restricted only to Beijing and the Great Wall and one or two other tour sites. To go anywhere else in the country was extremely difficult, essentially not possible. So I'm convinced the Chinese gave this farewell trip as a way to make people not go away mad, give them the chance to see a little bit more of China before they went back to their home country.

Bush wasn't able to do this in '75 because he had to go back and face his confirmation hearings, but sometime in that summer of 1977, although it also might have been just before leaving office in January of '77, he had dinner with the Chinese envoy, not Ambassador at that point, in Washington, who reissued the offer for him and a group of people to go with him to China as guests of the Chinese government. That was reissued at some later point and Bush thought that for me, as his autobiographer, what could be better than to go to China with them and that would help fill out that chapter of the book. Truly, it wasn't necessary for me to go for that purpose. I had all kinds of documents and interviews to write up a chapter as it turned out, but I certainly wasn't going to turn down the opportunity to go to China.

I've often said that to have gone to Beaumont, Texas, with the group of people who went on that journey would have been the trip of a lifetime because, in addition to George and Barbara Bush there was Jim Baker, not Susan Baker, Susan Baker had just given birth to their daughter so she wasn't able to come. There was David Broder of the *Washington Post* and his wife Ann, there was Dean Burch, who had been chairman of the Republican National Committee and Federal Communications Commission, great political friend of Bush's, and his wife Pat. There was Hugh

Liedtke, the CEO of Pennzoil and his wife Betty, Pennzoil lending its Gulfstream to get us across the ocean to Japan, and continuing on down there was Jim Lilley who was the CIA station chief in Beijing in 1974-75 when Bush met him, a marvelous, marvelous man, Chinese speaker who in later years became Bush's Ambassador to China, having been Ambassador to South Korea as well as the de facto Ambassador of the United States to Taiwan.

Then most interesting of all was Lowell Thomas, who is the great journalist-broadcaster, the discoverer of Lawrence of Arabia in the desert in 1917, who at that time was eighty-five years old. He had just remarried, and this trip to China was in effect, the conclusion of a year-long honeymoon that he had with his wife Marianna.

Young: He was all there?

Untermeyer: Oh yes, not only mentally but physically, to the point that on our journey we had the opportunity to go to Tibet. We were only the second group of Americans to get to Tibet since Chinese takeover of Tibet and clearly one of the very few people, westerners of any sort, to go to Tibet, which was amazingly remote, so remote, so little known, that it was truly not until the airplane went through the clouds and we landed that, roughly around the first of October of 1977, did I see that the place wasn't covered with ice and snow. Yes, it was covered with ice and snow in winter, but at that time of year it was sort of dry and desert-like. Anyway, so little was known that it was a thrill beyond merely going to China for us to do this.

Lowell Thomas and his son Lowell Jr., had gone to Tibet just before the Chinese takeover in 1949-50, when they did it they had to go on yak-back, coming up through India, through passes on a two-week journey. For us, it was an airplane out of Chengdu landing in the valley of the Brahmaputra in what was then, may still be, the only airport for that particular area. So a great thrill for us, but nothing like it was for Lowell Thomas, and it was because of his prior Tibet experience that President Bush invited him to go along. He was able to take a delegation of peers and journalists. So David Broder was a real journalist, Lowell Thomas was a journalist of historical value, and I was an ex-journalist for the *Houston Chronicle* but Bush suggested that I get credentials, which were easily arranged through my newspaper, former newspaper, the *Houston Chronicle*, so I was officially a journalist on this particular venture.

We went to Beijing, then flew to Chengdu in Szechwan and that was the jumping-off place to go to Lhasa for about three days, back to Chengdu, took a train to Chongqing where we embarked in a steamer which I recall was named *East Is Red Number 32*. We passed all the other *East Is Red* numbers going through at least 32 on that journey. We went through the gorges of the Yangtze and eventually wound up in Wuhan. We flew to Guilin, which is a beautiful place of lumpy-looking green mountains of the sort that Chinese painters have always liked, and eventually went to what was still called in the west Canton, Guangzhou, which is the last stop before going out through Hong Kong. So, spectacular journey. Interesting also because Bush had a chance to see his old friend Deng Xiaoping who had just come to power in China since what was called the "smashing of the Gang of Four," that is, Madam Mao, Jiang Qing, and her associates and as such, Deng Xiaoping was consolidating his power.

Young: So he had had the opportunity to meet Deng.

Untermeyer: He had worked with Deng, or known him during his time in Beijing—

Young: Yes, but that was—

Untermeyer: Before the effort on the part of Madam Mao to assert power that was crushed.

Young: Yes, before the Gang of Four.

Untermeyer: In fact, the way the Chinese do things, they adopt these phrases that you heard constantly. The “Smashing of the Gang of Four” was the incident that had just taken place that we heard about, and eventually I made an acronym called SMOGOF, Smashing of the Gang of Four.

Young: Bush was in China during this.

Untermeyer: As I recall, first of all, Bush was in China in '74-'75, while Mao Zedong was still alive. Mao died in September of '76 and Zhou En-lai same year, and the effort by Madame Mao and company to seize power took place sometime in the course of the next few months and that was turned back by a combination of Deng Xiaoping and the army. So Deng, even while he had a more modest title—I think he never had a title greater than Vice Premier—but he had asserted his leadership and so much the better because Bush had gotten to know him during that period he was in Beijing.

Young: I'm just listening to this with some fascination, because here's another case that is in a sense a loser job.

Untermeyer: Exactly.

Young: Which is turned to advantage. Relationships are established and the Chinese government thought he was at least a man worth a new visit.

Untermeyer: Yes, the Chinese were very clever at this. I think they are proportionately more clever than the United States in inviting opposition leaders to come to their country. We have a program, which as often as not is not very well funded, to bring over foreign leaders, but we just don't do enough. Any Ambassador will tell you how tragic it is that they just don't have the funds to bring over young talent. Anyway, the Chinese were very good at this. I've read in some books on the subject of U.S.-China relations that they deliberately invited Bush in 1977 as a way of getting at Jimmy Carter, who was not opening diplomatic relations with them as speedily as they'd hoped. I think that may have been part of their purpose, who knows. But at the very least it was a way of maintaining contacts and was certainly a very good investment on the part of the Chinese to have the future President, the future Secretary of State, and the future U.S. Ambassador as their guests at that early stage.

Young: Whether or not they guessed it.

Untermeyer: And, I might add, there is a continuing personnel or personal angle to this and that is that one of our escort interpreters, a young officer of the Chinese foreign ministry who spoke very good English, he had been allowed during the cultural revolution to leave China, go to England to study English, was a man named Yang Jiechi, who Mrs. Bush nicknamed Tiger Yang. And, as I understand, he's come to be known even in the Chinese foreign ministry. Tiger Yang, as I mentioned, was a junior escort officer. He was very good in English and became the chief interpreter for Deng Xiaoping and other major leaders of the Chinese leadership such that during that period, late '70s, early '80s, you could always see Tiger's head in between the shoulders of Deng Xiaoping and Margaret Thatcher or Ronald Reagan, whoever it might be that was visiting in that particular period.

He has subsequently risen through the ranks. He is today the Vice Foreign Minister of China with responsibility for the U.S.–Chinese relationship. He is assumed to be the next Chinese Ambassador to the United States, or at least the United Nations. We'll see if that happens. I rather imagine if George W. Bush becomes President, that will almost definitely be a certainty, and President Bush has kept up with Tiger Yang in both Beijing and the United States over the years, and I may have actually had a hand in boosting Tiger's career in that, in 1989, we're skipping ahead, but Bush sent me on the second [Brent] Scowcroft–[Lawrence] Eagleburger secret mission to China, where my particular charge was to meet with Tiger Yang and also Han Xu, former Chinese Ambassador to Washington, to talk on a more informal basis about U.S.–China relations and the aftermath of Tiananmen.

I did that, and I've got to believe that while the rest of the Scowcroft–Eagleburger mission was a failure, there was no progress made in, among other things, the release of Fang Lizhi, who was a Chinese dissident in residence in Jim Lilley's garden house during this particular period, no success, no movement on that at all. But I like to think that I had the greatest success on that mission because I clearly boosted Tiger Yang's career, to have the President of the United States send a personal envoy to Beijing to see him was something that clearly he could, was a message that went around the office and helped him a lot. I think he would have succeeded anyway, but I like to think that I sort of—

Young: So Bush's sending you on this mission had a purpose far apart from the main purpose.

Untermeyer: Once again, an echo of his belief in personal ties at different levels. No, I'm not sure whatever message I conveyed and information I got back was of any particular value, whether it paid my ticket, so to speak, on that Air Force aircraft on that special mission. I certainly had a wonderful time, and we'll talk a bit more about that later when I get to it chronologically, but it was an example of his desire to probe all possible points of contact insofar as it might—

Young: And renew, perhaps, renew, keep alive, a relationship that already existed.

Untermeyer: Very much. In any event, the Bush book project continued through the next year, not very easily, because by that time it was clear that George Bush was running for President, and he had set up an office in Houston. He had hired people, young people who would later become well known in their own right, like Margaret Tutwiler as a scheduler and Karl Rove as

his political strategist, Jennifer Fitzgerald who had been with him in China, had come to Houston to help in various arrangements. So this little group and I operated out of the same office, because that's where I worked on the book project.

It was very difficult to work on the book project because he was gone so much. In fact, one Sunday I needed to sit down and go over the manuscript with him and I had to meet him in the Los Angeles airport in order to just have that time. He was going around the country, speaking for Republican candidates in the fall of 1978. Furthermore, my drafts that I wrote were read by people like Jim Lilley and the late Richard Moore and Dean Burch, who gave their comments, and their comments were incorporated in the text and then had to be fed back out again and read by him and approved, in the case of the CIA chapter that needed also to be scrubbed by the CIA.

So we got to the very end of 1978 and the dawn of 1979, and we hadn't by any means finished this book. He was about to launch a formal campaign for President, and I had to go back to Austin to legislate for my district and the people of Texas, which meant that I was not going to be able to do anything for the next six months. We met at the Bushes' house on or about New Year's Day, 1979, and agreed that the Bush book should be given a decent burial and laid aside. There was some disappointment on the part of the publisher and the literary agent who were engaged on this matter. I think Bush paid back the advance that he had been given and which in part had gone to me, as well as to the expenses of the project. He had rights to everything I had done. These were all kept by the ever faithful and vigilant Don Rhodes such that several years later when Bush was Vice President, running for President again, that Vic Gold had access to my words and research that had gone into that project such that the chapters of the book which Bush and Gold published, *Looking Forward*, the chapters on China and the CIA, while they were Vic's words and finished product, nevertheless reflected my work and I duly got an acknowledgment in the book for that. I was always to be a silent ghost, I might add, on this project so there was never any ego issue. I looked at it as personal growth and interesting experience as well as income, and I'm happy that whatever I did in 1977-78 did have a future even though frankly it wasn't a very good book and not that revealing.

Bush runs for President, I run for reelection to the legislature. In the course of the '79-'80 Bush for President campaign, I did not have a very active role, largely because I did have my own small political career and my own income projects on the side, but long about December of 1979 I felt that I should do more to lend my hand to the Bush for President effort. It's not that he had asked me and I had turned him down, it just that it seemed to me that I should. So I went to see Jim Baker, who was campaign manager at the office in Houston where the Bush for President headquarters was located—not by coincidence, it was in the same building where I had my state legislative district office. So I was able to commute to and from the Bush headquarters by walking up a flight of steps, which was very convenient.

I saw Jim Baker and said I felt I should help out in the campaign, and in his very decisive way he turned around in his chair, looked up at a map of the United States—he kept various pins stuck in it—and said, “Well, why don't you run our campaign in Indiana for the Indiana primary next May?” And to have my request suddenly realized, which would also mean I would have to leave and go live in Indiana for several months was something of a shocker, but I said yes. I felt that if I were serious about my offer, I would do whatever it took. So I was put in charge of the Indiana

primary. I was given the name of a local contact who was furious, as I remember, that somebody not from Indiana was being given this responsibility, and I knew I would have to take care of that problem.

Fate intervened. That very night my father died, and it was clear that I needed to stay in Houston with my mother. It was also clear from a personal political point of view that it would be good for me to be in Texas at a time I might be challenged in a Republican primary. I was, although it wasn't a very serious challenge, nevertheless I was able to respond to it, and Bush perfectly understood for family reasons and personal political reasons why I would have to turn down Indiana. Indiana turned out to be, incidentally, one of the few states that Bush actually dropped out of the primary, not because he lost the best possible campaign manager, but because by that time it was clear that Reagan was going to sweep Indiana, and there was no reason to spend any money in pursuit of the Indiana primary.

What I did do, in 1980, was to organize a little project to respond to the personal mail that Bush received during this period. This was probably the first time in his life in which he was not able to respond to his personal mail, and this concerned him greatly. He could do a lot of things, note cards from the road, but it was harder and harder to do that. So having learned how to write a Bush letter at the hands of both him and Rose Zamaria, I was put in charge of this project. There was a stack of mail and I would draft up words, the usual few lines and upbeat, peppy thoughts that would respond appropriately to this person, and then go on to the next one. Somebody typed up the letter, which eventually was signed. I do believe that one of the letters quoted in the book *All the Best*, signed by George Bush, was actually written by me during this period, and I was amused to see that that was one of those selected for publication. [laughter] There were a few others who helped me with this project. Space was limited in the headquarters for it, and so I shared a desk with Jeb Bush. Jeb was on the road quite a lot so that was why I could use his desk. When he came I had to go find some other place, but this was the beginning of his and my friendship. We'd met before, but somehow the fact that we both used the chair and the same desk was a good beginning to our work together.

I had no further effort in the Bush for President campaign. He dropped out as of May of 1980, Memorial Day. After that there were just some finish-up chores. I should go back a little bit to say I was given a chore in the summer of 1979 that I responded to, by a man named Harold, or Hal, DeMoss, who was a lawyer in the Houston firm of Bracewell & Patterson, was the Bush chairman for Texas, for the Texas primary coming up in May of 1980. He asked me to call the Republican elected officials in Texas and to see if they would endorse George Bush for President.

There weren't many Republican elected officials in Texas in 1980. This took me maybe two days. Today it would be an impossible chore because there are hundreds, if not thousands, of Republican elected officials, but in those days there were only about two dozen state legislators and only a few county judges and commissioners and justices of the peace, people like that. So I duly called all these people, and I got turned down by all but two people: one state representative, Ed Emmett, who represented a district in Harris County, who was a Bush supporter and later a Bush appointee to the Interstate Commerce Commission, I might add, and a strange man who was a justice of the peace somewhere in the greater Houston area. I think he

endorsed Bush for obscure personal reasons having nothing to do with national policy or even George Bush, but whatever it was, I only managed to get two. Turned down by people like members of Congress or future members of Congress like Tom DeLay. That's because Texas was Reagan country and to the extent it wasn't Reagan and Bush country, it was Connally country. If you want, we can talk a little bit more about the Republican race in 1980. I was not involved, as I said personally, except insofar as trying to find some endorsers for Bush.

Bush drops out. He's chosen as Vice President. I didn't go to the convention in Detroit but heard the news that night, the same way the rest of America did. I still believe that event—Reagan's choosing Bush to be his running mate on July 16, 1980—was the news event, not involving me directly, that had the biggest impact on my life. Because, as time passed of course, I would go to work for Bush in Washington, which was made possible by his being chosen as Reagan's running mate.

Young: Excuse me, you said you heard about it on the news, you were not at the convention.

Karaagac: Before we get involved, even if you weren't there, can you speak to Bush's psychology or ambitions in this period between the Carter, 1977, 1980?

Untermeyer: Well, he saw that he had as good a chance to get to be President as somebody else, and he might speak to a segment of the Republican Party, what might be called moderate conservatives, who were concerned about, even fearful of a Reagan candidacy. It is interesting to note from the prospect now when we know what Ronald Reagan was like as President, that many people, including George and Barbara Bush, thought that Ronald Reagan was too conservative, too radical, too dangerous even. And I believe that right up to the time that he was chosen by Reagan to be his running mate, and therefore got to know Ronald and Nancy Reagan personally for the first time ever, that George and Barbara Bush thought that Ronald and Nancy Reagan were like the Reagan people that they had known and been victimized by in Texas. Reagan supporters in Harris County, Texas, elsewhere in the state, were very conservative, very mean-spirited many times, were quick to jump on Bush as being a preppie East Coast elitist with ties to the Trilateral Commission. All these kinds of angles that were successfully exploited by a young Reagan operative named Lee Atwater who was sent to Texas to help organize the Reagan primary campaign in 1980.

Reagan won the Texas primary. The overall vote was fairly close. For a while it looked like Bush might win the absolute majority of votes cast. But what really mattered were delegates, and delegates were selected from the Congressional districts that the candidates happened to win. Bush managed to win the Congressional districts around Houston, Dallas, maybe possibly one in San Antonio, so he was counted out where it really mattered—in delegate strength. But so he had no real prospect. Let me stop and say, he said, during the course of that campaign, 1980, that he did not want to be considered for Vice President. That's what Presidential candidates always say. But I think he may have felt burned out and depressed by the way things went. I was not present for this, but I think it's been historically proven that Bush wanted to continue the battle, even to the California primary. He had won the Michigan primary late in the season, in May, and that gave him courage to go forward, but Jim Baker was the keeper of the numbers. He knew that

there was no way that Bush could win the nomination, that all he would do would be to make Ronald Reagan angry and totally kill his chances of becoming Vice President.

Bush didn't want to be Vice President, or said he didn't want to. But Jim Baker had George Bush's interests at heart and basically saw to it that Bush dropped out of the race at about the last possible moment before he clearly would have so upset Reagan and Reagan's people that the idea of putting him on the ticket would have been an impossibility. There was a lot of reluctance anyway, in Detroit, for Bush joining the ticket, because of concern of his being too moderate, not Reaganite, not an embracer of Reagan's views and principles. Yet the marriage was made, and it turned out to be a brilliant one during that particular period.

Karaagac: A few more questions related to this. Following up on what you said, was there any talk of Bush's running on the China trip?

Untermeyer: Not that involved me. On the China trip in 1977 Jim Baker had with him Jules Witcover's book about the Jimmy Carter campaign—

Milkis: *Marathon*?

Untermeyer: *Marathon*, which had just been published. And that was his trip reading. The lesson Baker took from *Marathon* was the value of the Iowa caucuses and the early surprise that could come by a somewhat obscure candidate who would be able to get a lot of press attention by winning something that wasn't very contested. Therein was born the strategy that Baker and Bush did pursue, with success in Iowa, if not New Hampshire and other early primaries. And I recall that while I was not in them, I stayed in east Asia to visit friends in the Philippines, but on the Pennzoil airplane going from Hong Kong back to Houston, a refueling stop was made in Guam and that Baker arranged for Bush to meet the Republican leadership on Guam who had a few delegate votes at the convention. But they weren't going to have a chance to be in Guam again and maybe Guamanians voted for Bush, I'm sure. That was the "looking forward" part of that particular journey.

Bush had mentioned to me when we were fishing in the summer of '77, at that time I was doing the interviews for the book, what I thought about his running for President. I am embarrassed to say now I thought it was the most amazing question anybody had ever asked me, that the thought had occurred to him because at that time Jimmy Carter was a new President. We tended to believe that Presidents always got reelected, and as a result thought it was maybe a feckless notion or thing to think about when, with a good book backing him up, he might have a chance to be a good Secretary of State. And, in fact, along about that time, 1977, '78, he was approached and was told a candidate, a serious candidate to be President of Yale. I thought, now, there's a presidency that you could get that would be [inaudible]. [laughter] Fortunately it went to somebody else and the rest is known.

So I'm somewhat embarrassed to say I did not leap out of the boat and say, "What a wonderful idea, let me help you, go all the way, I can see it now all clearly." That didn't happen. But Jim Baker saw it, and Jim Baker had been Gerald Ford's campaign manager for reelection, almost

pulled off a coup, certainly got the nomination for Ford in a tough fight against Ronald Reagan, so Jim Baker's judgment proved to be more incisive than mine, I'm happy to say.

Karaagac: Well, Baker ran in '78, didn't he?

Untermeyer: Yes.

Karaagac: And he lost. How did that complicate the Bush plans, or how did it affect them?

Untermeyer: Well, Bush was off on his own, as I mentioned, campaigning for Republican candidates in '78. I've got to believe that he talked with Baker during that period, but he had set up his own little staff to help run this. When the election was over, the mid-term election of '78 and Baker defeated for attorney general, as I understand it, not a day passed before Bush got on the phone to Baker and asked him to be the campaign manager.

As I mentioned, the campaign headquarters had moved to the same building that I occupied as a state legislator on Post Oak Road on the west side of Houston and I recall, I was leaving my office and found myself in the lobby of this building with Jim Baker, who had just agreed to take on the campaign and I was happy for that. We were walking out to get to the parking garage. Well, a Houston deluge had taken place during the course of the day. This particular parking garage was so designed so that the bottom floor flooded whenever it rained, truly knee-deep water, and Baker's car was on the other end of the great wet that he had to get to. I didn't have my car in the garage that day, so I didn't have to go through the water, but he did. And I remember as he, I'm not sure he rolled up his pants to get through this to get to his car. But I remember him saying something like, "If it weren't for my love for George Bush, I sure as hell wouldn't be doing this." And this was going through water but, of course, it was also going through the campaign when it happened.

Baker lost the race in 1978 against Mark White, who went from being attorney general to Governor of Texas; it was not yet the time when being a lower ballot candidate could win an election for you as a Republican in Texas. It was the election in 1978 when, for the first time since reconstruction, they elected a Republican as Governor, Bill Clements, but very early, in fact, Clements barely got elected. He was topped on the ticket by a man who just barely won reelection to the Senate, John Tower. So it was a historic Republican year, but not a triumphant Republican year, and there just wasn't enough Republican strength to elect Jim Baker. It is an interesting thing to speculate what might have happened had he been elected attorney general, what that would have meant for George Bush and the growth of the Republican Party, but that's another oral history, I suppose.

I still have not gotten past the first point on our outline here. Let's bring it through 1980, in which case—

Milkis: I don't want to bog you down, I just want to ask you one question quickly. Given what you've said about issues like abortion and civil rights earlier in President Bush's career, how did you react to his joining the Reagan ticket? Did you view it with a certain amount of ambivalence

or skepticism that this marriage would work out, or were you just thrilled that he was tapped to be Vice President?

Untermeyer: Definitely thrilled, along with other people, because this was by far more than the consolation prize. It was a great thing in itself, and it was also clear that Bush being a well-established team player would conform, as any Vice Presidential nominee needs to conform to the President's platform, as he did, maybe with press criticism and some regret on the part of Planned Parenthood types, but they weren't in the majority in 1980 and the Reagan vote was. So it was with great excitement that even Reagan supporters greeted Bush's nomination for Vice President, because they knew that would create a very strong ticket and would really help in Texas, in not just winning the state but also carry in candidates for other offices.

Karaagac: I'm sorry to follow up on this, but George and Barbara Bush felt that their conservatism was different from that of Ronald and Nancy Reagan. Can you specify some of the points, since there is a tremendous reluctance on the part of the Bushes to say how their conservatism was really different, at a later time.

Untermeyer: There might be certain salient issues such as abortion that would separate them from Ronald Reagan or Reagan supporters. I have always believed it was, however, more a matter of style and emphasis. I became convinced growing up in the Republican party in the '60s and '70s that everybody pretty much believed the same thing. But the Reagan supporters, for want of another term, were strong conservatives, were much more emphatic about expressing it, of even using the word conservative, of talking about their philosophy as opposed to the needs of the country, to speak of philosophic principles and the need to act on them.

There was a very close relationship here. I'm not making a point about the role of the religious right, but people who are fundamentalist Christians tend to speak about their faith in a very overt way that is not the Episcopalian Bush way of talking about their faith. And I think there was a very close relationship there, reluctance on the part of Bush and many people like him in the Republican Party, to be as red-blooded, as emphatic in their conservatism as were Reagan supporters, who liked to refer to themselves as Reaganauts. It's not enough to be a Reaganite; real believers are Reaganauts. They never ever believed that George Bush was one of them because he did not speak with the passion and speak in the same language that they used to emphasize how conservative they were.

In addition, there was this element I mentioned earlier of being disdainful of the kind of people who supported Ronald Reagan and imagining that's what all Reagan people, including the Reagans themselves, were like. And that experience, which goes all the way back to when he was the chairman of the Harris County Republican Party, colored his views on the conservative movement as such and vice versa. When we talk later about 1984-88 period, this becomes a very central issue because he had to change to win the nomination.

Young: Let's have a short break now and come back and proceed.

Untermeyer: I'm worried that it is more than what you wanted.

Milkis: Well, we covered a great many years.

Untermeyer: Talk about my joining the Vice Presidential staff.

Young: We'd like to hear a little bit about that. You have so many windows on Bush that this is very enriching. We would like to hear something about staff work and get as briskly as we can to the transition and the nature of this unusual transition and to the silent committee, and maybe we can cover some of this before we break for lunch. I should say also that I'm very grateful that Chase can stay longer here than I can and that Sid and James and George can sit with him to extend the interview. Can you, Bob, be here for note taking beyond lunch tomorrow, and can you be here for the taping? Okay, thank you.

Untermeyer: In the fall of 1980, I was not involved in the Bush Vice Presidential campaign, as much staff required anyway, but it just never came to be. I had my own activities back in Houston and I was also a fellow of the Institute of Politics at Harvard, which was a wonderful program and one of my colleagues incidentally in that program was the late Ron Brown, who would later be Democratic national chairman and Bill Clinton's commerce secretary. The election of 1980 was held while I was in Cambridge. I think I was the only person in that community to be happy with the results, and clearly I had come to the conclusion that if I had the opportunity to go to Washington then I really should.

I was a state legislator. In theory I had the opportunity to run for and possibly get elected to higher office in 1982, but it was a rare opportunity to go to Washington if the call came. Well, the call didn't come. I began to get concerned or worried until it finally struck me, an important lesson, seems so simple-minded now that the call almost never comes [*laughter*], that you have to make the call yourself. That's what happened. After talking to Jeb Bush, getting his thoughts, and Jennifer Fitzgerald, an appointment was arranged for me to go to the Vice Presidential transition office, 734 Jackson Place on Lafayette Square in Washington, to meet with Bush. I believe it was December 2, 1980.

I did that and at the end of the day he invited me to join him at home, a temporary house they were renting before the inauguration, for dinner and in the car, Secret Service vehicle going from Jackson Place to their home, he asked me to become his executive assistant with an office in the West Wing, sort of amorphous duties, but I didn't need to be filled in on those. It was such a great, exciting opportunity that as I like to say, it meant the end of my active career in Texas politics so I tortured over the decision for two-tenths of a second, and I proceeded to do various things such as give up the third term in the Texas legislature to which I'd just been elected to make plans to move from Houston to Washington, which was pretty easy since I was single. I was also making \$600 a month. It never occurred to me even to ask what the salary was because I knew it was going to be in excess of \$600 a month and I would not have to worry about that.

We can or cannot talk as long as you'd like about the Bush Vice Presidency and staff. He put together a very remarkable group of individuals and individualists in that staff. Admiral Dan Murphy was the Chief of Staff, he had been with Bush at CIA, had been commander of the Sixth Fleet. I think he thought he was going to be Chief of Staff in the way that makes sense in the military, which was he was the boss responsible to the ultimate boss. But I do believe that

Admiral Murphy was overwhelmed and frustrated by being in such a political environment with such individual actors, each with his or her own relationship to Bush.

There was Boyden Gray, who had just become counsel to George Bush, there was Pete Teeley, the press secretary, there was [Thaddeus] Thad Garrett, who was the domestic policy advisor. There was a woman named Susan Alvarado who was the legislative assistant, there was myself with my history of going back with Bush, and then there was Jennifer Fitzgerald. Jennifer Fitzgerald had what is the most important position on the Vice President's staff, a point I made to Dan Quayle eight years later. She was the scheduler. Because Vice Presidents have no valuable commodity other than their time and how they spend their time or what trips they take, who they see, what speeches they give is the essence of a Vice Presidency.

That being the case, Admiral Murphy, Chief of Staff, truly had not much to do. He went to meetings and had various functions to attend, but all that mattered was to be the scheduler. And I've got to believe that part of the controversy engendered around Jennifer came from the fact that anybody who is in a powerful position in the White House, or for that matter in corporate America, who is in charge of a particular valuable thing, such as access to the boss or the boss's schedule, or budgets or some other commodity, will always be the subject of attack and abuse, and I think that's unfortunately what hit Jennifer.

Young: And all the people named had a previous association with Bush.

Untermeyer: Of some sort or another. Boyden Gray's relationship I think was less well developed, but the Gray and Bush families had known each other going back to the days when Boyden's father, Gordon Gray, was [Dwight D.] Eisenhower's national security advisor, and President Bush's father was Senator from Connecticut. Golf-playing buddy of President Eisenhower's. There were these relationships and each person had a direct tie into Bush, who was very happy to have that happen. So there was a great deal of disorganization on the staff, but it didn't seem to matter that much because it was after all the Vice President's staff. I do think we were viewed with great curiosity by the Reagan staff, which was very tightly organized and, with the exception of Jim Baker, Reagan's brilliant but remarkable choice to be his Chief of Staff in the White House, considering he'd been Bush's campaign manager, with the exception of Jim Baker, everyone else looked upon us with suspicion because, of course, we had supported George Bush for President instead of Ronald Reagan.

My responsibility, as it turned out over time, covered three subject areas. One was to keep in touch with the home base, with Texas. As a former state legislator I was able to do that and many, many people came to Washington as they are wont from Texas, and I would see them, give them tours around the West Wing, have dinner, keep in touch with the Bush folks in Texas by telephone or some other means. I also became, during the 1982 off-year election, the political aide on the staff, which meant finding out what candidates wanted Bush's time, what party organizations wanted him to help raise money, and to try to get those on the schedule. Because, as I mentioned, the person who had the schedule was far more influential on these matters than was the political advisor. Nevertheless, we tried to make that work during 1982.

And the third function I had, which is relevant for the rest of today's discussion, is that I was the liaison for him with the Presidential Personnel office in the Reagan White House. This meant dealing with the many, many, many people who had supported George Bush for President in 1979-80 who assumed that now that he had this title of Vice President, would be able to get appointments for them in the Reagan administration to various full-time or part-time jobs. This overlooked the clear fact that Ronald Reagan actually had more friends in America than did George Bush, if that can be believed, and that he had won the election and as the result, he had the ability to give out those favors and his personnel directors, epitomized by Helene von Damm, who had been Reagan's personal secretary for many years, wanted to reward the faithful. And that meant clearly not giving anything to Bush people.

Now Bush people did manage to get appointments here or there, notably in the Department of Commerce, where Bush's Connecticut campaign manager and friend Malcolm Baldrige was secretary, such that the Commerce Department began to be known as "Bush Gardens," there were so many political appointees that worked in the Bush campaign. There rose the legend in conservative circles, epitomized by the publication *Human Events*, that Bush and his people had taken over the Reagan administration. Now Jim Baker was in a very powerful position, to say the least, but it was very hard to find anybody else, other than possibly the Secretary of Commerce, in any big responsible position who had a clear Bush tie. Yes, there was the occasional appointee here and there. Eventually I would be named an Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and when I looked at the forty or so other political appointees in the Pentagon in the Reagan administration, there was not another one who had worked for or supported George Bush for President in 1979 or '80. Not that there should have been, but clearly I was not in command of the defense department. I had not been insinuated into that job to run the place in some grand fashion for Bush. But that legend did persist—that he was the odd man out.

I believe that Bush's own status within the Reagan White House was immeasurably helped, and laterally we on the staff were greatly helped, by two events that occurred which Bush had no control over but which helped him greatly. The first was a really routine decision on Reagan's part that the Vice President would be named the "crisis manager," a position that meant nothing more than he would preside over meetings of the National Security Council, on which the Vice President has historically sat, if the President himself were not there and could therefore help manage crises.

It seemed almost unnecessary to issue such a decision, but this absolutely infuriated the Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, who made a public issue of this and in so doing, he made it clear that he was the odd man out, he was not the team player and that Bush, who had not been in the least bit triumphal over this designation, was the team player. Only ten days later there was the attempt on Ronald Reagan's life, which occurred when we were on a trip to Texas, Bush's first trip to Texas as Vice President, and his demeanor and activity during that day, perfectly in context with the way he does things, greatly impressed the Reagan loyalists, who of course were very terrified and scared as was the rest of the country over how the President would respond to being shot and the surgery that followed. It never occurred to me, I'm sure it never occurred to George Bush, that he would do things like sit in the President's chair in the Cabinet room. But the mere fact he didn't impressed the Reaganites who felt that here was the time that Bush would try to elbow his way into a position of importance. So he was given great credit for that,

which I don't think was deserved credit because he would have done it anyway, but that cleared the atmosphere greatly, and he became perceived by the old Reagan supporters as more of a friend than they imagined.

This helped me in my dealings with the White House personnel office, not so much with Helene von Damm as with her then-deputy, John Herrington, who was a former marine and in the wonderful way that marines think, in absolutes, you're either friend or you're foe and Bush was now a friend and therefore Bush's supporters, myself included, were also friends. And it made dealing with Presidential Personnel easier. Still didn't mean many people who supported George Bush got the kind of things they wanted, but at least I got to know them and know the kind of things they wanted, such that eight years later when I was myself director of Presidential Personnel, it was then possible to give these folks what they wanted and what George Bush clearly wanted them to have.

My day-to-day experience on the Vice President's staff was to sort of just be there, and being there wasn't merely the West Wing but on the many trips which George Bush took. He has always been a man in motion, he kept on being in motion long after I left the Vice President's staff and as President, and to this very day as a private citizen. But in the roughly two years that I worked on the Vice President's staff, I made, by actual count, ninety-nine trips. Ten of them were foreign trips, and some of the foreign trips were two to three weeks long. So you get an idea that we were gone a considerable amount of time. I went on all those trips without necessarily any clear function other than to be there.

It was fascinating to be in discussions with the Foreign Ministers and Prime Ministers. I got to do all sorts of marvelous things of the sort that would fill anybody's life of Washington experiences, such as having dinner at Number 10 Downing Street with Margaret Thatcher, going with the Bushes and the rest of the staff to the Vatican for a private audience with Pope John Paul II. Dinner with the Queen of Holland at her residence, and what to me will always be the most special was to go into the Imperial Palace in Tokyo for lunch with Emperor Hirohito and the crown prince and princess, now emperor and empress. So these were all glorious experiences, plus many, many others that took place. But, frankly, I began to get very anxious to leave, because it was clear to me that what I needed to do was to get into one of the departments and agencies where there was substantive work being done, the real governing of America, that the staff was wonderful and no doubt I could have stayed and continued going on trips and meeting all these people, but it lacked the substance that I wanted.

After all, the Vice President is himself kind of staffer to the President and assistant to the President, so we were only helping somebody who was helping the President. It was what I like to call living on a diet of whipped cream. It was very rich and thick and delicious but not much to chew on. So I reached the conclusion over the period of time that led to my going to see Bush in his cabin on Air Force II in November 1982 when we were heading back after a very fascinating two-week trip to Africa with a side trip to Moscow for Leonid Brezhnev's funeral. In that meeting I said to him that I felt it was time to leave the staff to go find an appointment in one of the departments. The place I wanted to go was the Navy Department because of my prior association with the Navy and because it was definitely an action ground during the Reagan administration under Secretary John Lehman.

Bush absolutely said that was the right thing to do and I think there is something significant about him, and that is, unlike certain political leaders who had a coterie of people who stay with them for years, either because they cling to the political leader or because the political leader expects them to be his loyal retainers always at the call, in contrast to those people Bush has always believed that his folks should move on, should go off and do things on their own either in government or in business, whatever it may be, that is always a better thing for them, that he did not want to have them cling to him. In fact, I theorized that he had greater regard for me leaving his staff than when I was on his staff. That's not to say that he didn't regard me well, but just the fact that I wanted to leave and go off and do something substantive was to him very positive and it took a while. Even if you have contacts in to the Vice President and the Chief of Staff, that can't always guarantee an appointment for yourself. I had to wait for a position to open, in effect to be created at the Navy Department, as by title Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Installations and Facilities, and I left the Vice President's staff in March of '83 to do that.

I was in that job, which I found very interesting, rewarding, for about a year until an assistant secretaryship opened up. I was helped to become assistant secretary, in this case for manpower and reserve affairs, by John Herrington who had been deputy in Presidential Personnel to Helene von Damm until he had been able to get the appointment he wanted for himself in the Reagan administration, namely Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, and would have very happily stayed there were it not for the fact that Helene von Damm went on to be Ambassador to her native Austria, creating vacancy as director of Presidential Personnel and he was pulled back to the White House to do that job. It was in that capacity in February 1984 that he called me when he heard that his old job was open again, and he was for me and Bush was for me and that helped my getting the nomination and later appointment by Ronald Reagan over I might add, a candidate favored by the Secretary of the Navy but there followed four very excellent years dealing with the personnel of the Navy Department, which means Navy, Marine Corps, as well as all the civilian employees of the Navy Department.

I mention this, I would go into those details just because it proved to be very valuable when I went to head Presidential Personnel to have been an appointee myself and to have known how important it is to have, to arrive in a place with the, if not the welcome, then at the least the cooperation of the people whom you were joining. The Reagan White House said, and to a great deal they were correct, that they controlled all appointments. The Cabinet Secretaries and agency heads did not control the appointments. Therefore the appointees were loyal to the President, not to the Cabinet Secretary or agency head. That was largely true. There were certain Cabinet departments that they wouldn't presume to instruct whom to take, but they at least cracked the whip as a regular matter and with greater success than we ever attempted in the Bush administration.

The only problem with that would be that if a Cabinet Secretary or agency chief is given someone, they have to take that person because the person arrives with the appointment of the President to function, to occupy that title and perform that function, but they don't necessarily have to be a member of the team. They don't necessarily get the key papers, they don't get invited to the right meetings, they aren't part of the in crowd that really decides what happens. And I went through some of that at the Navy Department, not that it kept me from doing the

huge bulk of the job that I needed, but I never was part of the inner circle for Secretary Lehman, which I regret only because he was such a fascinating individual with such knowledge and such skill in government that I'm sorry I didn't have a chance to learn more from being closer to him. But as Yogi Berra said, you can see a lot just by looking, and as such I was able to learn a lot from just being around Lehman, if not one of his intimates.

Young: On the Vice Presidency, you mentioned the Haig affair, the crisis management, the assassination attempt as a circumstance that changed the local climate at least, or the expectation of relations between Reagan people and Bush. Were you in a position to observe how Bush himself handled his personal relations with Reagan and how those developed? On a personal basis first, and second, was there any more work he did besides designated work he had, in regulation for example, that would be important as Vice President?

Untermeyer: Bush approached the relationship with Ronald Reagan the way he would any other person, with great desire to make a friend, and he found in Ronald Reagan somebody who himself valued friendships and good relations, so they hit it off splendidly, which should be no surprise, knowing both men. But it did take a bit of getting to know each other, which is why it was very interesting in the opening months of the Reagan-Bush administration how the weekly luncheon, which was basically a Carter-[Walter] Mondale invention and which served to guarantee the Vice President an uncrowded hour with the President as a regular matter, regardless of how many other times they might see each other during the course of the week.

Bush and Reagan did these luncheons regularly throughout those eight years. And in the early times, because this was so important—this was the Vice President's time with the President—the Chief of Staff, Admiral Murphy, had us basically staff this as you might a meeting, to turn up with points to be raised, issues that were coming forward. That didn't last very long because I don't think in the end Bush ever used them, that he just got into a mode of talking and discussing issues with Reagan and perhaps to consulting with Murphy ahead of time as to what sort of things might be worth mentioning, but knowing probably you couldn't have a very long agenda for something like that. I think that speaks to the fact that they became much more personal than governmental meetings.

Young: Okay.

Untermeyer: You ask about regulatory matters. Clearly Boyden Gray should speak to that. I believe the significant thing to note is that one absolute piece of advice which Walter Mondale gave Bush during the '80-'81 transition was something that Mondale himself had been taught by his mentor, Hubert Humphrey, which was, do not take an ongoing special assignment, as Humphrey had had to do—I think “space” was his special assignment. The reason being is that—

Young: That would have been [Lyndon] Johnson.

Untermeyer: During the Johnson administration. The reason being is that the Vice President has no power to command the bureaucracy and is left with a responsibility, or what appears to be a responsibility, and no ability to actually do anything about it other than hold meetings. So

Mondale said he had taken Humphrey's advice to heart and had avoided any kind of ongoing responsibility of that sort.

Well, I'm sure Bush conceded that that was right but it didn't take, as I recall, more than one or two days after the 1981 inauguration that Reagan asked Bush to head a regulatory relief task force, which was an ongoing responsibility without any ability to command the bureaucracy but which worked out through the very useful means at the staff level of Boyden Gray working with Jim Miller, working with Christopher DeMuth to come up with a regime that allowed prospective regulations to be reviewed and allowed through the Office of Management and Budget. That proved to be very helpful. It was one of the important pieces of the Reagan economic program, which people tend to forget when they think of budget cutting and tax cutting, that regulatory relief was a key part of Reagan's philosophy as it was Bush's. He had campaigned in 1980 in the Republican primary on deregulation, so he welcomed the assignment and it helped him, I think, a great deal as a result.

Young: Okay.

Milkis: I thought a lot about midnight regulations issued by the Carter administration that were reversed by that task force as well. It wasn't just reviewing new regulations.

Untermeyer: That's a very good point. Once again I wasn't directly involved in that but I think you're quite correct. Another ongoing responsibility he took was the so-called "South Florida Task Force," which acquired another name later, on drug interdiction. There was another instance that probably helped Bush politically, certainly in Florida, for taking it on. Admiral Murphy welcomed it because this gave him a chance to actually have a function as the one to primarily deal with the Coast Guard and DoD [Department of Defense] on operations of various sorts, so that had a happy ending and essentially disproved the Mondale recommendation.

Back to Untermeyer at the Navy Department. I had concluded, as of about the summer of 1987, that I should move on from the Navy Department. Also in advance of 1988 I felt I should do something for Bush in his effort to be President. Since I am not a political person in the sense that Presidential campaigns consume political people, that is, those who are strategists or pollsters or fundraisers, it didn't seem to me that I could do very much good for him in the business of getting votes or money in 1980, but, because of my experience with him as an appointee, I felt that I could plan his transition in the event he was elected President.

This was an idea that came to me during the fall of '87 and I went to one of Vice President Bush's Christmas parties around that time and exposed this idea first to George W. Bush, who was at the party and who was at the time living in Washington as the eyes and ears of his father in the campaign headquarters. He thought it was a very good idea, but more importantly he went off and immediately told his father about this idea such that when the time came for me to leave the party and say good-bye that Vice President Bush told me that he had heard what George had suggested and he thought it was a very good idea and that he would think about it.

Well, he did think about it. I was called about two or three weeks later, one of these times when Bush was alone and craved company. It was a Sunday. I was working in my office in the

Pentagon, the White House operator found me, and he invited me over to the Vice President's residence to watch the football game and have some dinner, and it was in the course of that occasion that we talked about this idea. Now, he was just entering the primary season. There was some question as to whether he would win and in fact he did lose the Iowa caucuses not too long thereafter, so he felt it was a little premature to have a transition planning project, but we did discuss it. One key thing I remember him saying that he would want to do if he became President is to make sure it was clear that people saw that it was his administration, not merely a continuation of Ronald Reagan's administration. That would affect personnel as much as policy. Clearly there would be a continuation of the basic policies on which Reagan and Bush campaigned, agreed, and implemented in office, but it would be a different administration.

That's as much as I heard at that point. I did hear back about April from him after he had won enough primaries and it was clear he was going to be the nominee, that he wanted me to flesh out the ideas, which I did in the form of a memo, and I wrote the memo to him on the eve of going off on a private trip to South America. I had resigned from the Navy Department anyway. I felt it was time for me to move on and because I knew I'd be having this project to follow. I often joke that I won distinction in the Navy Department by being there for five years and never having once taken a foreign trip. It wasn't that I didn't want to go overseas, and in fact, in the course of the spring and summer of 1988, entirely on my own, I made three foreign trips and the first was, excuse me, I made one quick one to give a speech in Zurich and then I went off to Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

When I came back I found, amongst the mail that was waiting for me, a copy of a memo that Vice President Bush had sent to Craig Fuller as Chief of Staff and to Rich Bond and the key political people, which essentially rewrote the memo I had written for him about this project. And he said that he wanted me to head this transition planning project, that it would be a very quiet project, he did not want it known publicly because that would make it seem that he was presuming his election, which at that time was something funny to think because he was running behind in the polls and would sink even further in the polls such that no one could accuse him of excessive presumptuousness on that occasion, but he still felt that that was important. He also felt that it was important that this project be quiet because he knew how political people operate and that if someone who had ambitions for public office in a Bush administration thought that they could find another way to get there without having to help get George Bush elected President, that they would do so. And he wanted everybody to elect him President, which is not an unwise attitude with regard to that sort of thing.

So I was told that mine would be a very quiet project, that I would be able to follow my recommended course of action, which was to have very quiet interviews with people, knowing that there would be some risk the word would get out but not to make a big deal out of it. I would work out of my apartment in Washington, not have an office, at least at that stage. This I proceeded to do, and as a result I had many useful conversations. Two in particular I might mention were one with Pen James, Pendleton James, who had been Ronald Reagan's first director of Presidential Personnel. Helene von Damm was his deputy for the first year, although in many ways she was the keeper of the Reagan flame, and Pen James was somewhat suspect because he'd come out of the Ford and Nixon administration, but he had a lot of solid thoughts on the subject, which proved to be very useful. His most emphatic recommendation was that we

do personnel work in advance of the election so that there would be no engulfing exposure of the hapless director of Presidential Personnel to all the résumés and candidacies being pushed by various important people.

He was absolutely right about that as I came to see and I still believe, but my instructions from Vice President Bush were to do no personnel work, not even to the point of recruiting a staff to do anything after the election, but to merely gather information, come up with plans and certain recommendations accordingly. That was Pen James' contribution among others.

I also met with people who could help with the understanding how the personnel process worked after the selection of candidates. Now, I should say that my charter on transition was broader than personnel. There were two other areas, namely policy and administrative operations on the transition itself, but I concentrated on personnel because I knew that was by far the most important thing that has to happen and because of my own interest and involvement as a former member of the Vice President's staff.

One of the appointments that I had to talk about how a nomination is handled was with a man named Oliver "Buck" Revell who was, I'm not sure he was the deputy director of FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], but he was a ranking assistant director of the FBI under whom came the clearance process run by the FBI. So I met with him in his office, a little episode I might mention that says a lot about Revell and, I'd say, the post-Edgar Hoover regime at the FBI, which he still represented. I went to his office in the FBI Building, the Hoover building, and we were discussing the processes of clearances and he said, "You know, one of the things that hold up the clearance of a Presidential nominee is whether that individual has traveled extensively overseas because we have to contact our agents who are in the embassies in those countries, and they have to contact the chief law enforcement people with whom they deal like Scotland Yard or the French Sûreté and find out whether that person comported himself or herself well in that country and then bring that information back. And if people have traveled extensively overseas, this takes a lot of time." He said, "For example" —and he leaned over the coffee table— "here is *your* file." He proceeded to list all the foreign trips I'd ever taken. It was a very interesting little tap on the shoulder in the wonderful way the J. Edgar Hoover FBI operated and Buck Revell, who lived on in his spirit.

I mentioned that there were two other areas of the transition planning project that I oversaw, but which I asked others to do. One was policy. Policy was a particular challenge in that, after all, George Bush was hoping to follow the Ronald Reagan administration he himself had served. It was not expected that policy would be radically different. There would be different emphases as indeed there were, and certain things such as the S&L crisis would be given highest attention in the Bush administration whereas they were not in the Reagan administration. Those were the differences that would happen in policy, but the information and the attitudes towards policy were clearly going to be the same. So dealing with it was a particular challenge.

We had the example of the 1980-81 Reagan transition in which, in a classic case of the out party taking over from the in party, they had organized various transition teams who went into the agencies to find out what existing policies were, what budgets were, a lot of personnel questions. This was done probably to excess. That is, the transition teams were very big. They were staffed

with a lot of people who were ambitious, if not for appointments for themselves, then for inside information that would help with their lobby practice or their law practice of one sort or another. And there were many, many stories during the '80-'81 transition that I recall about the excesses that were done during that time. And it was also well known that as soon as Ronald Reagan took the oath and his Cabinet was sworn in, many people like Caspar Weinberger dismissed the transition teams and essentially tossed away their recommendations, so that certain Cabinet officers of strength and experience, like Weinberger, considered it a very foolish waste of time and effort.

That experience existed, it seemed to me that the way to approach it would be to find some way of very quietly gathering together just what existing policies were, so that the policy apparatus during the transition could go forward with very junior people going into those departments and agencies and gather the basic facts about the budgets and what the positions were and any particular problems expected to arise during the first six to twelve months of the administration. This was what, in fact, happened and I think the fact that we used small teams of very junior people who were not threatening to the civil servants, did not have major ambitions of their own, was a useful lesson learned from the '80-'81 experience.

I asked Bob Kimmitt, a Washington attorney, to do that particular job. I met him briefly. He had been the general counsel of the Department of Treasury. That's where he first got to know Jim Baker. He became one of Baker's celebrated protégés and later was Under Secretary of State for Policy and Ambassador to Germany in the Bush administration, very impressive man. I chose Bob Kimmitt because in the summer of 1988 when Bush chose Dan Quayle, there suddenly arose a controversy over whether it was known at the time that Quayle had used family political influence to get into the National Guard during Vietnam. This became a big blowup immediately after Quayle's selection. And in the reaction to this fracas, a lot of fingers were pointed.

I should say that there were people on Bush's Vice Presidential and political staff who did not favor the selection of Quayle. I wasn't around in the convention, I wasn't there in the meetings, it just seemed very clear to me that those who did not favor Quayle were trying to escape any blame for his selection. I believe that the selector of Quayle was George Bush. Lee Atwater was an advocate for someone like Quayle, that is, a younger person who could appeal to baby boomers, and whether or not Lee Atwater particularly promoted Dan Quayle, I don't know. But I do know that in the rush to avoid any blame from the national press on the selection of Quayle, that various people were all pointing toward Bob Kimmitt.

Bob Kimmitt had been in charge of the screening process on Vice Presidential candidates and the question was, had he asked the question of Quayle's military service and how he happened to be there. Well, this issue ultimately had no effect whatsoever on the 1988 election. It had some significant effect on Dan Quayle's own personal reputation and the image that he had to bear during his Vice Presidency, but at the time it was a fracas and I just knew, correctly, that Bob Kimmitt, a man of great honor and discipline and brain power, was under the gun. He had to take the rap for not asking this crucial question, how did you get into the National Guard in Indiana back in 1968 or whatever the year was.

So when I approached Bob Kimmitt to do this, entirely on my own, knowing that here is this immense resource, this fellow who probably feels like he needs to hide under a rock during this particular period. And I think I was right. Kimmitt absolutely welcomed this assignment. I told him that it was entirely me speaking, I wasn't authorized by anybody. But he contacted people he knew in departments and agencies who dealt with policy matters, and our plan was to organize this almost like a communist cell in which I talked to Kimmitt and Kimmitt made particular phone calls to particular people in departments of the government, or people who were practicing law or otherwise knew the policies of those departments, and they only knew that Bob Kimmitt had called in. They didn't quite know what further contacts up the line were underway.

So in this means nobody amongst the group with whom Kimmitt was working knew of anybody else working on this particular matter, and through that means we were able to gather information. The other thing that needed to be done was to work on what could be called the paper-and-pencil side of the transition; that is, the administrative operation of the special-purpose, ten-week federal agency that is known as the Office of the President-elect. The federal law had created the opportunity for the General Services Administration to staff this particular entity. It was, and I think in any transition, continues to be truly a seventy-day agency that exists just for the purpose of providing administrative support during the period between the election and the inauguration.

There is preparation for this purpose and the GSA, then and now, goes and finds a building, identifies it in advance, makes sure the building is equipped with appropriate materials like photocopy machines and computers, telephones, paper and pencils and yellow stickies and all the other sorts of things that go to making an office. They make contact with both campaigns and, in effect, they hold up the key and say, "Will the winner please contact us the day after the election and we'll give you the key to the office." Not quite as simple as that, but it is an operation that is largely run by the General Services Administration. Still, it was necessary to have somebody on our little project who would find out about these things to be the liaison with the GSA and begin to make those particular plans.

And I asked a fellow named Fred Zeder, a very colorful character who was a personal pal of George Bush's going back to days when Fred was on the Dallas City Council when Bush was running for the Senate in Texas, and their relationship had developed over time. During the Reagan administration Fred had an interesting position. If I recall the title, he was the President's personal representative to the Micronesian status negotiations; that is, the negotiations being conducted with the islands of the old trust territory, the Pacific islands, the Marshalls, the Marianas, and the Carolines. It was Fred's job to go out and actually go have conferences on these islands with these various chieftains to work out their future status, which, over time, did come to fruition. But clearly he wanted a larger role. Eventually he became the President of OPIC, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, under Bush, but he jumped to this particular role of finding out what the administrative needs would be of the transition. He put together a team of folks, young men who later went with him to OPIC, and they dealt with the GSA, much easier arrangement.

I might say that one bit of guidance I gave them that came to fruition was that whatever amount of money the General Services Administration had by way of appropriation to fund the

transition, that our budget should be at least a million dollars less than that. Because at the end of the whole process, when the books were closed, I wanted the story in the *Washington Post* saying that the George Bush transition had under-spent its budget and returned a million dollars or more to the federal treasury. So they did. The budget was so arranged and when the books were closed sometime in the spring of 1989 there was a story in the *Washington Post*, exactly as I'd hoped, pointing out how frugal the Bush transition had been and a statement by the officer of the General Services Administration who was in charge of all this that it was a squeaky clean transition, and he was a pretty tough reviewer of all pieces of paper such that he wouldn't have said that freely unless it had been true.

Meanwhile, my cover was blown as the quiet transition planner. It was blown by the former director of Central Intelligence himself, George Bush, in an interview he gave David Broder on the eve of the Republican national convention. It was a larger article that Broder, chief political correspondent for the *Washington Post*, was writing about the search for Vice President. In fact, it may have been in that article that I saw that Bob Kimmitt was in charge of the screening committee. But whatever it was, along about paragraph seventeen was a little mention that Bush had asked his former aide, Chase Untermeyer, to head a transition planning project. Well, just as Bush had known, and as I myself was aware, that as soon as that happened there was an immediate explosion of telephone calls to me and in-gushing of résumés and letters of people who wanted to make contact with this transition planning operation and who wanted to make sure that they knew, that I knew, that they were available for service in the event Vice President Bush was elected President.

Now, when this happened, I was still operating out of my apartment, and I told people when they called that I was under instructions to do no personnel work, that all I could do would be to just keep their résumé, that's all I could do, just hold on to it for whatever possible use might later be made of it. Well, that was enough for a lot of people who sent me a résumé. Soon, there got to be quite a pile. I needed a place to keep these résumés, so I went into the closet of my apartment and there was a very good-sized cardboard box, which had contained a Texas hill country smoked turkey, which some friends had sent me the previous Christmas. It was a good box with handles and it just seemed to be exactly what I needed for this purpose.

Young: Can't be any more literal than that.

Edwards: Let him finish.

Untermeyer: So that from that point forward, when people called and said, "I'd like to send you my résumé," I would tell them, "Well, you can do that if you want but I can't do anything with it but I will promise that I will put it in the turkey box." And the turkey box became a famous metaphor for that particular part of the transition planning process. I have to say that the box itself is here at the Bush Library containing papers.

Young: Are the papers turkeys?

Untermeyer: I think they still have the aroma. I will say that not everybody fit in that category, that out of those who contacted me before the election, there were a couple of people who

actually did get appointments and served with great distinction, so we can't be so cavalier. There are some people who are not politically sophisticated enough to know that sending in your résumé is not the way you do things. But they proved to be able people, just not politically sophisticated, and therefore the turkey box had its function.

As I did my readings, and I did a lot of reading on the subject, and I had lots of interviews on these matters, I did formulate some recommendations it seemed to me that we should do if Bush were elected. I should say, give a little advertisement here to Jim Pfiffner of George Mason University who wrote a book called *The Strategic Presidency*, and that was, I found, very useful. I read that on the trip to Taiwan and took lots of marginal notes and political scientists are always delighted, if not astonished, to know that somebody actually takes their advice but I did come up with lots of ideas from reading his book, and others, that I formulated into some recommendations for Bush.

One thing we did, which I think was very good practice, was have a series of meetings. They ended up being four in number, roughly in September and October of 1988 at the Vice President's residence. Attending these meetings were George Bush, Jim Baker, and I and along about the second meeting or so, John Sununu, the Governor of New Hampshire who had been so critical toward Bush's victory in the New Hampshire primary. Now, why did John Sununu show up to be part of this? Well, it was very clear to me, I didn't have to ask any questions, that Bush envisioned that he would have a role in his administration if elected.

At this time in the fall of 1988, there was all sorts of buzzing around as to what the future would be of Craig Fuller, who had been Bush's Chief of Staff during his second term as Vice President. Craig Fuller was never in these meetings; John Sununu was. It was rather clear to me that John Sununu would become Chief of Staff to President Bush, not Craig Fuller, and I developed accordingly a relationship with Sununu. I'd pick him up at the airport and tell him what I was doing and then we'd go off to the Vice President's house usually for lunch with Bush and Baker and, on one occasion, George W. Bush. What we did was to make certain recommendations. That if you are elected this is what should happen, and we would get decisions by Bush, preliminary decisions, to move forward on those recommendations in the event of his election.

Young: This was more than personnel or just personnel? Steps in the transition.

Untermeyer: They were steps in the actual transition, the organization of the office, and yes, a lot of personnel decisions. For example, very sensitive issue of how to obtain the resignation of President Reagan's appointees. We can talk about that a little bit later if you wish, but the decision to obtain those resignations was made at that time in the relative calm of a Sunday afternoon during the campaign. It would not have been so easily done or with as much thought in the days immediately following the election, so that that was the real advantage of these conversations, was to think things out, to talk them out and to make preliminary decisions for later execution, such that when the election was held and I was named head of Presidential Personnel and Craig Fuller and Bob Teeter were named the co-leaders of the transition themselves, that we all knew what decisions had been made, it wasn't necessary to try to get time on the very busy and difficult schedule that then existed.

Milkis: Was it important, if not the most important theme of those discussions at those four meetings, about how to establish a distinctive Bush administration from the Reagan administration? Was that a central— because you had mentioned that in your very early discussions with President Bush he had expressed a concern about that.

Untermeyer: It was never—

Milkis: Or was it more technical?

Untermeyer: It was technical in the understanding, in the context of knowing that that's the kind of administration he wanted to put together. And clearly, as always happens at the start of the administration, the world is made new with every election, such that it would have been his administration anyway. We just had the challenge, but I think on the whole the advantage, of following a Reagan administration and having a pool of talent from whom to draw and to make them members of a Bush administration, not just carryovers from a Reagan administration.

It was at one of these meetings in late October of 1988 that Bush raised something he had mentioned, with, I think, a worried expression, once or twice before, and that is, how Presidential Personnel was going to be handled. His chief concern was that there were all sorts of people who had known him for years and he had known who had helped him get elected President who might be overlooked or forgotten in the process of creating an administration when the usual gears of Washington would go into overdrive. And people who knew how to work the system would come rushing forward with their candidacies for these offices. So he clearly wanted to have a director of Presidential Personnel who was sensitive to that.

Jim Baker had been promoting a particular individual who was the head of the Russell Reynolds executive search firm office in Washington. I'm not quite sure what the personal relationship was between Baker and this individual, but Baker felt that somebody like that, a professional headhunter, should be in charge of Presidential Personnel. He made the point or made that recommendation at least a couple of occasions, a couple of meetings that I recall. But Bush was very uncomfortable with that because he knew, whoever this person was and however well Jim Baker thought of him and however expert he was at executive search, would not have that degree of knowledge of the Bush people that he wanted.

Well, eyes were not focused on me, but I clearly knew that I was the person who could do this job and probably nobody else. This is why I've often said that I was fated to become head of Presidential Personnel, because I had known Bush and Bush people going back to Texas days. I had dealt with a lot of these people in the early days of the Reagan administration. I knew many of them by name, and I knew what jobs they wanted for the most part, and of course, I knew the way George Bush thought about people, which might be harder for somebody else to do.

Now, I have to say that becoming director of Presidential Personnel was not my own personal desire in the Bush administration, because I knew it was a very tough job and I knew that it was, in the end, staff work, exactly the sort of thing that I had wanted to leave the Vice President's staff to go into one of the departments and agencies. I believed then, I believe all the more so now, that that is where people who are truly interested in doing something in government should

be—outside the White House. You might have to spend some time in the White House to begin with, but otherwise to try to get away. But I could not escape from the notion that this role was truly one I could perform.

So when the meeting ended, I walked over to where Vice President Bush was and said that if it made him feel any better, that this role, Presidential Personnel, was one that I would be willing to handle in the event he was elected. I could see relief come to his face. I don't know that this was an elaborate, dramatic plot on his part to get me to make that offer—he might have asked me to do it specifically later on anyway—but I could tell that that was a relief to him. And, in the way things happened, he made that decision, and in fact there is a piece of paper extant, in which, that very evening, he sat down and typed out a note to Jim Baker saying that if he became President he would want Untermeyer to be director of Presidential Personnel and Boyden Gray to be counsel to the President. Boyden having been, as of that time, counsel to the Vice President so he would continue in that role. He said he had confidence in both of us to do this and it is necessary for the director of Presidential Personnel and the White House counsel to work together, because it is the counsel who has to clear the nominees and certify to their good faith and conduct before the name can safely go forward to the Senate.

I might add how I found out about this note, and that is, a few years ago, during the Clinton administration in fact, a friend of mine who is an autograph collector sent me a catalog of offerings at an auction. And among the offerings in the catalog was a blue-bordered Vice Presidential note to “JAB III,” which interestingly the catalog writer thought was Jeb Bush, so it said this was a note written by Bush to one of his sons, and this was offered for sale for \$1,000. The interesting thing is how this got into the hands of this catalog house. I don't believe Jim Baker is in the business of selling off his George Bush autographs, and I can't tell you how. Maybe Baker saw this and tossed it and somebody working in campaign headquarters fished it out and said, “Here's a George Bush note, I think I'll keep this and maybe one day it may be worth something.” Or it could mean that somebody went through the Baker papers at Rice University and just took it. Whatever, I mentioned this to Boyden Gray, Boyden Gray being a very rich man, I knew he would want to have this, and indeed he paid the \$1,000 and all I asked was that he make a photocopy of this letter and send it to me for my files, so he has the original. That was done in the closing days of October.

Bush communicated this preliminary decision to his son, George W., who as I mentioned was working in Washington and I remember seeing him, in the course of seeing him at headquarters or at parties in which we would talk over this particular responsibility. And he said that his father was greatly glad that I decided to make that offer, so I knew what life was going to be like for me after election. That being the case, still there was work to be done. The most important thing that happened in the remaining days of the pre-election period were meetings I had with Bob Tuttle. Robert Tuttle, who was director of Presidential Personnel, in the second Reagan term, a man I'd known. This is one of the many advantages of having been a part of the Reagan administration myself, knowing a lot of these people. And Bob and his staff made available a considerable amount of time to brief me on what every Presidential appointment there was to fill in the main departments and agencies of the federal government.

I violated Vice President Bush's guidance to the degree that I did recruit someone to be my deputy on the assumption that I would have no trouble getting that person made my deputy after the election as proved the case. I knew this was something that more ears than mine should hear, and I asked Roscoe Starek, known as Ross Starek, who had been a White House liaison, that is the political personnel man at the Department of State during the Reagan administration. I had dealt with him on Presidential Personnel. We in fact knew each other only by voice for the better part of two years before we just, by coincidence, met at a party. But he was very much interested in political personnel; he knew the importance of it. He had been, like myself, an appointee and had a full understanding of what kind of challenges there were for political appointments, appointees, so I asked Ross to join me, no guarantees at all, but he willingly did that, and he and I sat in the old Executive Office Building in the offices of the Presidential Personnel staff, which we would occupy.

In fact, that office where we met became Ross's office not too many weeks thereafter. All the people on the staff of Presidential Personnel with responsibility for particular portfolios came with big black books filled with what were called "authority sheets." The authority sheets were literally that. They were citations from the federal law establishing particular positions or authorizing filling of so many assistant secretaryships, telling what the real responsibilities were of these positions, and giving us the sense of how important they were and how difficult they would be to fill, or maybe how easy in certain cases it might be to fill those particular jobs.

These authority books later came into the possession of the transition, and they are also here at the Bush Library; they continued to be used during the administration by the people on my staff who had responsibility for those same portfolios. Very helpful, what Bob made possible and he said, very flatly, that if Michael Dukakis, the Democratic nominee, got elected President, he might and might not give the same briefing for Dukakis' people.

At the very end there was a little episode, which I mention just to point out the spirit of the time because it was clear that Bush was going to win, and Fred Zeder, former Ambassador to the Micronesian status negotiations, and a very outgoing, expansive personality, offered to give a party for all those people who helped in the transition. At that point, and this was Saturday before the election, it was clear that identities could be known, and we called this the "coming out party," and this is where all those people who worked in the transition, including all these individuals from Bob Kimmitt's communist cell structure, were invited to Fred Zeder's house. And it was a great sense of surprise and awakening as people said, "Oh, you've been working on this too. I didn't know you were doing this." So there was a great deal of fun about the evening as well as the excitement that would be justified in just a few days when the election was done.

My final chore in the transition planning project was to prepare a report, the actual plan. Although, in practical terms, this report was not of particular value except insofar as it encapsulated all the decisions that had already been made. I mentioned, with some quaintness, since we are now talking about November 1988, that this was done by me, on the typewriter, using colored pencils and a ruler, not a computer. It was put into a folder, not unlike I used in sixth grade to write class reports of one sort or another. As a particular document, also here in the Bush Library, this is not as important as the planning that had gone ahead of time.

I was invited to come to Houston to be at the Houstonian hotel and go to the George Brown Convention Center on election night. I remember an incident there as the cheers were rising as it was clear that the electoral victory was in progress, talking to George W. Bush, soon to be a Dallas businessman, in which he said to me, since we were both born in the same year, 1946, “Did you ever think the day would come when the Vice President of the United States would be younger than we are?” And no, we hadn’t thought that there was such a Vice President, and if he had asked the further question, and do you think either of us will ever become President one day, or for that matter, Governor of Texas, then I might not have thought of that either. But that was a memory of election night.

Young: Excuse me, so the report, whether or not it was itself of value, your planning for the transition connected knowledge, the authority and the knowledge of the administration and the nature of the positions to be filled, with the canvass by the junior people of policy in the departments.

Untermeyer: Yes, this thing was all laid out—

Young: With personnel. Those three things were connected together; steps to be taken, the personnel based on knowledge of policy and knowledge of administration.

Untermeyer: And how to—

Young: How to run it.

Untermeyer: How to run the transition as an administrative entity and how to organize these teams to go out into the departments and agencies.

Young: Okay.

Untermeyer: I should say, the wisdom of having those four meetings at the Vice President’s residence ahead of time was proven by what happened on election night; because I had time on the schedule, about 5:30 or 6:00, to go into Bush’s suite and to give the report. And there was Baker, there was Bush, there was my report, there were their copies, and I’d just barely started to give this report when Bob Teeter, the campaign pollster, rushed in with exit polls from key states like Ohio and Michigan that showed a bigger Dukakis vote than expected; it might even mean that Dukakis would win those states. It turned out to be a false report, not a real worry, but my meeting was over. [*laughter*] It just pointed out the fact that if I tried to keep all these decisions for making on or after election night it would have been very difficult to do that, given the way things are during an election and immediately afterwards. So that was a good turn of events.

The next day, the morning after, Bush held a press conference at the George R. Brown Convention Center and at that press conference he made three announcements: he announced that he had asked Jim Baker to be his Secretary of State, and he had asked Boyden Gray to be his counsel and Chase Untermeyer to be his director of Presidential Personnel. So Boyden and I had the distinction of being named right there at the very beginning, right after Jim Baker, and that was because Bush knew that our work would begin immediately.

What also began immediately was the absolute explosion of phone calls on my telephone back in the office, which I now occupied at the Republican National Committee, no longer at my apartment during, I would say, the last month of the campaign. The young woman who was staffing the office there said that as soon as President Bush said those words, which she was listening on television at the time, that every line lit, and it stayed like that for the rest of the time. In fact, you might say it stayed like that deep, deep into 1989 in the office I occupied at the White House.

Now, at the time I was in Houston and there was the triumphal return of George Bush aboard Air Force II to Washington, and it was on that flight that the final decisions were made about how to obtain the resignations of Reagan appointees. I was in conversation on the phone with Bob Tuttle at that time, and it was decided that—this, I might add, had been decided in one of the pre-election meetings, but this was the execution of the decision—and the request was that it should be Ronald Reagan who asked for the resignations of his own appointees so that it wouldn't require George Bush, new President, to play bad guy and in effect fire people. This was coupled with a request, and the request would be that those appointees of Ronald Reagan who desired to remain in the Bush administration should issue a letter, and we worked out a form for this purpose, which would say whether they wanted to stay in their current position or move on to some other position and if so, for what one or ones they would like to be considered.

This softened the blow in that it indicated an interest in the experience of these people, that we weren't just tossing them out, and that, as time proved, that many, many of those individuals, and I'm sorry, I've never found out the exact number, but hopefully a Ph.D. candidate will someday, just how many people who served in Presidential appointments in the Bush administration had had Presidential appointments in the Reagan administration. They clearly were an important source of talent, of people who had experience and knowledge, and that is why the conservative shibboleth which grew up during that period that "Bush fired all the Reagan people" was wholly incorrect.

In fact, one of the other pre-election decisions that was made was that while we were going to obtain the resignations of these people, we weren't going to ask them to vacate their desks until such time as someone else, nominated by George Bush and confirmed by the Senate, actually arrived to take that position, thereby creating a genuine transitional period in which people would be able to continue with our full confidence, because we came out of the same administration and would lessen the shock that happens in the traditional transition whereby you do fire everybody and there are literally empty desks starting January 20.

George Bush's was the first Presidency in sixty years to follow one of his own party, without the intervention of a cataclysm like a resignation or an assassination. That is, you have to go back to when Herbert Hoover took over from Calvin Coolidge in 1929 to find the previous administration where a President was elected of the incumbent President's party and a transition was softened. I, of course, studied the Coolidge to Hoover transition and discovered in Hoover's memoirs a simple paragraph in which he said he decided to keep all of Coolidge's appointees, that he would change the Cabinet, but that he wasn't going to worry about the subcabinet.

Well, a couple of points need to be made. One is, of course, the federal government was so much smaller in those days, essentially tiny, closer probably to the way it had been in the previous transition of the same party to itself, namely when William Howard Taft took over from Theodore Roosevelt. Closer to that day than to the one we faced when the federal government was so much bigger and there were hundreds, hundreds more Presidential appointments.

The other factor of course is that Hoover had been a member of the departing Coolidge administration and in the tiny Washington of those days, he knew a lot of those people in the subcabinet, and he may have played tennis with them at the Chevy Chase Club on balmy summer evenings in 1927, and as such he probably was confident that those were good people who could be retained.

We faced a totally different situation so that the Reagan-to-Bush transition was unique, if not literally, historically the first time it ever happened.

Young: The food has arrived...

[BREAK]

Young: Are we about to get to the “silent committee”?

Untermeyer: We’ll do that right away. During the pre-election conferences at the Vice President’s house in Washington, one of the preliminary decisions that was made was to convene a group to be chaired by George W. Bush, which his father dubbed the “silent committee,” and the purpose of this group would be to gather, as soon as possible after the election—as it turned out it was the first day that the transition headquarters was opened, at the intersection of Connecticut and Florida Avenues—to put together the list of those people who had been the most loyal, most faithful, and most sacrificing of all Bush helpers throughout the years, going back especially to the ’79-’80 campaign, because almost everybody from that campaign was involved in ’88 as well.

The people who were asked to do this were a variety of folks like myself, who had been associated with Bush going back at least to the ’79-’80 campaign and included Fred Bush, who is no kin to President Bush but was his campaign fundraiser in the ’80 and ’88 efforts; Margaret Tutwiler, who had been brought in as early as the 1977-78 period to do scheduling and was a great protégée of Jim Baker; Jane Kinney, who had worked, I believe, in Bush’s Congressional office and definitely at the Republican National Committee; Alixe Glenn, who was a press aide who had been involved in the ’79-’80 effort. Sheila Tate was a relative newcomer. She was the press secretary during the ’88 campaign who did not have a role in the subsequent Bush administration, she left to go into political consulting in Washington; Don Rhodes, the stalwart, genuine Bush family retainer who came into the family circle in the 1964 campaign and I met him in the ’66 campaign, and he’s worked either in the government or private payroll for the Bushes ever since; and Lee Atwater, who had been, of course, the campaign strategist. There were some others but I would have to go back and check my notes as to who they were.

We convened in a conference room in the transition headquarters. The opening comments were made by George W., who was just about to leave Washington to go back to Dallas where he would become the managing partner of the Texas Rangers baseball team. He opened the meeting by saying that the purpose of this committee was not to root out and punish their enemies but to identify friends and supporters of President-elect Bush and to make sure that they were remembered. Whereupon Lee Atwater, sitting to George's left, said, "Well, hell, that's the committee I want to be on." As such we didn't have the rooting-out committee and Lee did participate faithfully. But the idea of this was just to truly write down names. This process served its purpose, and a list of approximately a hundred people was put together.

These were not people who were necessarily going to get jobs; many of them probably didn't want jobs, at least not full time. They might want an invitation to a state dinner, they might appreciate being on a delegation to a foreign celebration of some sort, they might be named to a part-time advisory board or commission, if not a full-time job, but at least they would be remembered. President Bush's concern was that, in the rush to fill positions, they might be forgotten or they would be too hesitant; they might not know the way things get done and would be overwhelmed in that particular search.

George W. oversaw this process and I recall there were several meetings, and I couldn't attend all of them because I was the director of Presidential Personnel in the transition and had to spend a lot of time back in my office as opposed to that particular meeting. But in the end what was put together was called the "silent committee list." And when a name might go forward to President Bush via John Sununu, the Chief of Staff, in the brief biography that would be listed on the sheet describing that person, if the word "silent committee" was there, then that was an indication that they were on that list.

It wasn't enough just to be on the silent committee list, because the regular operation of the Washington way that President Bush feared did occur, and many times people who did want a full-time job of some sort were being sidetracked or thrust aside by Cabinet officers who had their own candidates to promote or to obtain jobs for. It would be at times like that they might call George in Dallas or some other person would call on their behalf to George and he would then call me. Of course his was a call I would always take, and that would be a reminder that so and so on the list was being screwed over by a particular Cabinet Secretary who was pushing somebody or that so and so hadn't been contacted, was still waiting for something or felt neglected or forgotten. This was his role in remembering those people and to be the advocate for the list. It was a role that he was particularly well suited to perform.

As I never tire in telling interviewers nowadays, George W. Bush was in the campaign as would have been any other worker. I don't know whether he got a salary or not, but the fact is that he was there doing the same sort of things in the headquarters, at the water cooler, at the coffee machine, or out in different states looking at a campaign operation there, as his father's representative and advocate.

Now, it might seem strange. Why should it be necessary to have somebody reminding people on the campaign to think of the candidate? And the answer is, they don't as a rule. And this is the

great wisdom that George W. had from his prior experience in Presidential campaigns, namely '79-'80, in which there were various political consultants and other politically experienced individuals who view the candidate as just the means to their own ends. And sometimes the candidate, as I like to put it, is the baggage that they have to carry on their way to being famous. Therefore, it was George's role to remind people that they were there to elect his father, not to make themselves look good. Or in the event of a loss, not to make themselves look good when everybody else was so obviously stupid, not to take their brilliant advice or to follow their lead.

So that was the role that George really admirably fulfilled, and I absolutely know that it governs his own attitudes towards his own campaign. And when, in this year of 2000, there have been all sorts of articles written about how Bush relies upon a small group of personal loyalists who have been with him in Texas, I view that as an absolute expression of the same kind of attitude he carried on as the chairman of the silent committee; that is, standing by those people who have stood by you and whom you can trust when times get bad as well as when times are good.

So that was the particular role of the silent committee, and the only role that George W. performed with regard to personnel. I would get a call occasionally from him about a particular candidate. One who bears note is a man named Michael Williams, the black attorney from Midland who had been George's friend in Midland. In fact, when he, Michael, had run for county attorney in Midland County at some point in the '70s or '80s, George was his campaign manager. It was very unsuccessful but a friendship was born, and George felt that Michael would be a very fine appointee and in fact he did become the assistant secretary of education for civil rights, got into a bit of controversy, of interesting note, because Michael had read the speeches and tracts of the campaigns and seen that it was the administration's policy not to support quotas. And when it came across his desk, the idea of what are today called race-based scholarships, he said that we don't believe in that in this administration, and he turned down this proposal or otherwise made it known that he opposed it.

This got into the press that the Bush administration was against trying to help minorities or however it was billed, and I regret to say that the White House ran for cover and overruled Michael to the point that he, Michael, became a hero to those in the conservative movement. And I recall a column by George Will, who never was an admirer of President Bush, saying that the Bush administration was like a doughnut, all that was worthy was in the outer circle with a hole in the middle.

Anyway, Michael Williams in our own time was named by Governor Bush to be on the three-member Texas Railroad Commission and was elected in the election, actually he was nominated in the Republican primary of 2000. He is unopposed this year so he will be elected, first black Republican elected statewide. So he, George, had a role in advocating for certain individuals, but I should say that he was not alone in that among members of the Bush family. His uncle, Jonathan Bush, of New York, was particularly active in pushing the candidacies of people who had worked with him in New York Republican politics and particularly fundraising.

Young: At what point, if ever, was John Sununu part of this silent committee's work or just a client for it or what?

Untermeyer: He was not a member. He was finishing out his final term as Governor of New Hampshire.

Young: Oh, I'm sorry, the timing of this did not include—When was the silent committee?

Untermeyer: The silent committee was immediately after the election and closed up some time short of the inauguration as I recall. Sununu became, or was announced as Chief of Staff sometime late in November, at least it was two or three weeks after the election. As I said, I never had any doubt that he would be the Chief of Staff, I'm not sure to this day why he wasn't announced earlier than he was, but the fact is that he was occupied in Concord as opposed to attending these particular meetings.

Young: Okay. But he subsequently came to have an important role.

Untermeyer: And because he recognized absolutely the value of political loyalty and because many of the people who were on the silent committee list helped win the New Hampshire primary, he was a great believer in it and an advocate for the very concept. Of course, he also knew that was what President Bush wanted and that was his job as Chief of Staff to ensure, but it gets hard when one is Chief of Staff to face a Cabinet Secretary who is bound and determined that his or her former assistant on Capitol Hill or in some other job is going to get a job, and they're up against somebody who worked on the campaign and whom the Cabinet Secretary invariably labels a hack and not up at all to the quality of his or her favorite candidate.

At that point the Cabinet Secretary has to keep the faith, and I will say in several occasions that, this for Presidential-level appointments, Sununu was the advocate for those people that, those on the silent committee or otherwise, as far as the Oval Office sometimes having to face down a Cabinet Secretary right there, with mixed results. But he was a great believer in that necessity, which was one of the many reasons why I then and now am a great admirer of John Sununu. I've never felt the sting of his tongue or any of the other personality traits which gave him a very negative reputation and which caused his ultimate problems.

I found him to be an excellent partner in these matters for the obvious reason that he had been Governor and had had to make appointments on his own. He didn't like it, because I guess no Governor, as well as no President, really likes the personnel process. And when I would go into his office with stacks of folders to make the case why this person should be his and my joint recommendation to President Bush, I often saw him recoil at my entry, knowing that the least fun part of his day was about to start. I referred to myself as like a dentist who makes house calls. He was faithful to that charge and once having signed on to somebody he was that person's great advocate, and so I found him to be an excellent partner and boss.

Milkis: Were there particular Cabinet members who were especially tough to deal with when these kind of decisions were made? Do you want to get to that later?

Untermeyer: We can talk about it later, but in short answer to your question, there were certain Cabinet officers, namely Jim Baker and Nick Brady and to some extent Bob Mosbacher, who would, of course, get what they wanted just because of who they were. The more troublesome

cases came with, you might say, the second tier of Cabinet officers who were politically astute, not part of the Bush first circle, who nevertheless knew the ways of Washington and were clearly out to get their appointees.

The two who come to mind, well three come to mind, were Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense, Elizabeth Dole, Secretary of Labor, and Jack Kemp, Secretary of HUD [Housing and Urban Development]. I'm going to talk some more about that, but they were very much of that category, and then there was a third tier of Cabinet Secretaries who were less insistent on "their appointments." I found that that phrase was one that I wished that I had a Presidential bar of soap that could scrub out the mouths of any Cabinet Secretary who referred to assistant secretarial level jobs as "my appointments." Because, of course, they are the President's appointments and yet they did think of them proprietarily, and that was a phrase I kept hearing and caused much gritting of teeth during that period.

But we return to the days of the transition, which was literally from the day after the '88 election, November 9, until January 19, 1989, on the eve of the inauguration. I should say a few words about the transition headquarters. As I mentioned, it was originally a commercial building at the corner of Connecticut and Florida Avenues in Washington, which the General Services Administration acquired. It was wholly turned over to the transition, so many floors were occupied. A curious building in that it had a unique design and that was that instead of having an adjoining parking lot, it had parking on every floor in the middle of the building. It was built like a doughnut. And if you therefore had an office on the seventh floor, your parking place was on the seventh floor. The entire building was roughly circular, or rectangular, and this unique design, for those of us who had our offices on the upper floors, nine and ten, it meant getting extremely dizzy going to and from our parking spaces.

The real need of any transition headquarters, more than anything, is security. Because, not that you're worried about crazy folk coming in with bombs, as you are hoping to stave off the job seekers and other people who have ideas they want to press—

Young: Getting dizzy.

Untermeyer: Right, valet parking. That was very common. I found that there was never any escape from this and since volunteers are used quite a lot in transitions, my office, for example, had well over a hundred volunteers of people opening mail and sorting out résumés, and meanwhile promoting themselves. But one of the categories of volunteers I found inescapable were the drivers and if I had to leave the transition office and go to the White House or some other place, I found myself invariably lobbied by the driver, whoever the driver was, because they knew this was their chance, so there was never any real escape from that time. In fact, there was no escape literally for me, roughly from the election until deep into 1989.

I do recall that I went to Baltimore to have Thanksgiving with some friends, and the Republican House class of 1986 had a retreat on the eastern shore of Maryland, and Lamar Smith of Texas, a great friend, invited me to go out there and meet with them. But those were the only two occasions from the election until May of 1989 that I left the borders of the District of Columbia. And it wasn't until much later in May when I went to Austin to give the commencement address

at the LBJ School that I got in an airplane. But that just points out how encapsulated one can be in personnel, with no need to go anyplace else. The world will literally come to you.

My first and greatest need was to recruit my own staff. As I said, Vice President Bush, I guess we should call him *now* President Bush, had said that I was not even to recruit personnel staff. I had violated that in the choice of Ross Starek as my deputy, but then we had to choose the people to manage the different portfolios, grouping of jobs in various Cabinet departments. That took about a month as I remember. And a month is a very critical period of time during a transition, such that we really couldn't get started and could only be reactive in the extreme during that period. But it was time well spent.

I'll say again, I wish it were possible to do this work before the election so that people are ready to go immediately, but the fact is that the time invested brought forth a very gifted group of people who, I'm happy to say, proved to be a very harmonious and collegial body. In fact, we are still great close friends and every time I can and I'm in Washington, I get together with all or some of these people just to talk over old times and what goes on. But the fact is that we did work well together.

Pen James, who had been Ronald Reagan's first Presidential Personnel director, had said that he had a rule which he urged upon us and we adopted, which was that anyone coming to work in Presidential Personnel would vow to stay there for at least a year. This was to avoid what Pen learned at his cost in the early part of the Reagan administration in which people would come to Presidential Personnel, rather like my friend John Herrington, and stay there only as long as it took to find a good position for themselves, line it up, and then in effect say good-bye, boss, and create therefore an immediate vacancy in a very critical job, associate director of Presidential Personnel, that then you had to take time to try to fill that so that you could get back to work on filling all the other full-time Presidential appointments. So that pledge was exacted from people. As it turned out, they were there longer than I was. I left after two and a half years, and pretty much my original team was still in place and would stay in place until the end of the Bush administration.

As I said, we were mostly reactive because, unfortunately, we didn't have the ability to tap into any lists of people prepared during the pre-election period. That meant that we had to react to the sources of input that will come during a transition. First are the résumés. A lot more I think is made of résumés than should be because, in the first instance, you want a source of talent and information that goes beyond the other traditional sources of names and so there's something to be said for people who literally offer themselves. And, believe it or not, there were some good people to be found there, such that that is not a fruitless process but it is a major paper-handling chore, which requires physically opening all those thousands, tens of thousands of envelopes and then seeing what people want to be and trying to categorize it. This has all been made easier by computer technology, but there is still the immense physical chore of dealing with these thousands and thousands of pieces of mail.

I can read into the record if you want what the numbers were but they did run into the tens of thousands. This was after an eight-year Republican administration. When you'd think that a lot of thirsts have been slaked, but it was not the case. There still were many thousands of more

people who for whatever reason had waited until George Bush got to be President or merely were trying again, having been unsuccessful during the Reagan administration.

The other sources of information that will come in are from the new Cabinet Secretaries designate from major leaders and minor people in Congress, from party chairmen in various states, from the President's own chairmen of his campaign in those states, to family members, to major contributors. All sorts of people who must be paid attention to in one degree or another, will have names, as often as not because someone has asked them to submit a name, and because of who they are, their offering must be acknowledged and given a certain degree of attention ranging from the pro forma to the intensely serious.

As I mentioned, part of the problem that comes if one is totally unprepared, as we were, is to deal with Cabinet Secretaries who have come from Capitol Hill or some other position where they have a fixed coterie of individuals whom they want to bring with them to their Cabinet department. These may not be bad people at all, and in almost every instance are loyal Republicans, it is just that they were back in their office on Capitol Hill or in a think tank perhaps during the time when the true loyalists on the silent committee list were going without much sleep, food, and pay in New Hampshire, trying to get George Bush elected. And it could well be that these people, protégés of Cabinet Secretaries designate, might have even been against Bush, might have said critical or snide things at Washington cocktail parties during the primary season, and yet were shameless enough to want to give their loyalty to this wonderful man later in the year when an important patron wanted to push them for these particular positions.

I should say here that, because there is a constant debate over the quality of Presidential appointees, clearly that must be a consideration and I believe was a consideration for everyone whom George Bush named to office. However, within a country of a quarter billion people, there is a large amount of talent and there is a large amount of talent that can come in just through the transom of a transition, let alone whom you might be able to bring in yourself. That being the case, you have to sort out the varying degrees of ability or qualification and quality of individuals. And one that I believe is intrinsic to the role of Presidential Personnel is to try to find people who are the supporters of the President, and if you know who they are to begin with because of their past service in the campaign or personal relationship to him, then those are the people whom it is incumbent on Presidential Personnel to promote.

It isn't just a matter of rewarding the faithful, of giving jobs to those who sacrificed time or treasure to help get the President elected. I truly believe that in the whole context of Presidential appointments that there is a presumption on the part of the American people, when they vote for someone to be President, that that President is going to choose people who will carry out the agenda of the President, the platform on which the President ran and the reason why they decided to give their vote to that particular individual. Therefore, you want people who are loyal to the President and who are pledged to carrying out his programs and the very tough jobs that we expect them to do.

In other words, I see the Presidential appointment process in the United States, and certainly as we tried to do it, as a reflection of the Presidential mandate or, as I like to put it, the Presidential

mandate made flesh and blood. It wasn't just a matter of scratching political itches, but this was the effort that is made by any administration to try to get people in those departments and agencies who are going to be committed to the President's program, because they are supposed to be. That's why George Bush was elected instead of Michael Dukakis.

Young: But how do you ascertain that? How do you know a person's pledged, how do you get a feeling for that, besides the people who you know are loyal but are pledged to the President's program?

Untermeyer: It is true, history bears out many, many cases of people who you would think are going to be pledged to the program who in office will do something else. And that presents a challenge for the White House to crack the whip or the Cabinet Secretary to look over their shoulder, and those natural processes occur as a part of it.

Young: But there wasn't—Your reputation was that there was a sort of an ideological test, at least in the Reagan administration.

Untermeyer: I sense it was not that kind of thing. Ideology is too heavy a word. I think the key is the question of the President's programs, and there is no question as to what those programs are; one of the services provided by the policy arm of the transition is to have ready just what the candidate had said on the campaign trail, or what the Republican Party platform had to say on that particular subject, what the inherited policy of the Reagan administration would be as to what needs to be done. So that the *what* is less important than the *how* or the *who* when it comes to trying to affect— So when it came down to sorting people out, and there are lots of things to sort out, I always used the word "ability" to describe what we were seeking rather than "qualifications." The reasons being that qualifications can be just that, just what is written on a piece of paper. And a person may have a great deal of knowledge of the subject area, but this is not, after all, merely an academic exercise and it isn't just a question of who knows the answers to all the questions.

We're looking for people who are going to be effective in their jobs, who are going to be able to carry out the President's program or to defend it, to make sure it isn't sidetracked or sabotaged, and therefore you need somebody to operate in the multidimensional world of Washington, of dealing with civil servants, dealing with people from other departments and agencies who may have a different institutional view, dealing with the Congress, dealing with the press, dealing with interest groups, dealing in general with your own staff. All these needs press upon the typical political appointee, which is, yet again, another advantage, along with my colleagues in Presidential Personnel, having been an appointee myself and seeing how that plays out.

So, the word "ability" as I deployed it encompassed a great many things. Yes, qualifications, certainly enough knowledge of the subject if not lifelong scholarly expertise, to be able to deal with the issues, but also the ability to do the job and to survive in Washington. And we again had eight years of Reagan administration to see the kind of people who do well and who don't do well in those particular types of jobs, and that's the reason why I do believe that the Bush administration was more quietly effective than the Reagan administration. The Reagan administration had many true believers, people who were very forthright in advancing a

particular line of thought but who, in many cases, were unable to carry out those policies as fervently as they believed in them and as much as the President may have wanted them, just because they were not able to get along in that multidimensional world I tell about.

Young: I was looking at your list and the various factors or considerations that were laid down. This is the standard, “Remember the faithful, work with the Cabinet.” That presumably, particularly applied to White House staff. Appointees—you’ve laid out what that meant; diversity, and beyond those guidelines, the President didn’t concern himself with the details. Is that the—

Untermeyer: Yes, do you want me to discuss these?

McCall: There are also two on the other page.

Young: Oh, I’m sorry I missed two. “New faces in old places, old faces in new places.” And you’ve listed that under George Bush’s attitude on personality. It didn’t require a good deal of teaching for you to understand that, I take it.

Untermeyer: Yes, well, do you want me to read it into the record?

Young: You don’t have to, this will go with the record, but this is a pretty comprehensive list and pretty clear cut in terms of the Presidential interest in appointments.

Untermeyer: George Bush was accused, especially by movement conservatives and other conservative writers, of not believing in the Reagan philosophy of government and as a result holding himself open to drift or compromise that led eventually to his defeat. I always operated, and I do believe he operated on the notion that the policies and the philosophy that underlay them were taken for granted. That that’s what we knew the government was going to do. The difference was necessarily being very loud about it.

Our administration didn’t have a Jim Watt. Jim Watt was a classic example of a man who was a very committed believer in the Reagan philosophy and who said so and got a great deal of attention and a great deal of supporters amongst other true believers, but who was sadly incapable of carrying out his function without bringing controversy, undue controversy, which led eventually to his ouster. And when Jim Watt was gone, all that commitment and all of his own skill, because he really did know how the Interior Department worked, having been deputy assistant secretary of the interior in the Nixon and Ford era—all of that was lost.

It seemed to me that what you want are people who are going to be able to stay there long enough to do what you need to have done. But since there weren’t such vivid personalities, the notion was born that Bush didn’t care about philosophy, that he didn’t have a vision, that he had no philosophical compass when it came to running his administration. As I said, I believe that was assumed; it was contextual in his policies. But without question, he was indeed motivated by such things as wanting highest ethical standards so that his appointees did not abuse their trust and the trust of the American people. He very much believed that it was necessary to remember those who had worked for him and make sure that they had their chance to serve and provide that

degree of loyalty. He very much believed that instead of the White House insisting on its appointees, or the reverse, just supinely taking at least in every instance the Cabinet officers' choices, that there was to be a cooperative effort, to make sure that in the end people were generally satisfied with the choice. That is, that the Cabinet Secretary would accept the individual who would then be able to go to that department or agency and be part of the team, while still being a clear member of the administration.

Young: Do you think his objective was satisfied, was reached?

Untermeyer: I do indeed.

Young: There were exceptions in all cases, but I mean in general.

Untermeyer: The record speaks for itself in that there weren't any such scandals that bedeviled past administrations or the current one. And that was not casual. It came about because there were very high standards, and we made sure as people were put through the system, which I'll describe shortly, that all that was known ahead of time and decisions made whether to proceed with that person's nomination or to fight for the nomination in case any criticism was raised against that individual's past deeds, and to create, maintain a sense of community so that people would continue to be a loyal member of the administration.

This wasn't invented with us. Almost everything that we instituted in Presidential Personnel grew out of the eight-year Reagan administration, which was a great learning experience, and I'm convinced that the process and the attitudes toward dealing with appointments that came to fruition during the Bush administration were of a piece with the Reagan administration. It is the right way to handle it. It's not the right way because it's the Reagan-Bush way, but because it does show how things should be done, the absence of which has bedeviled the Clinton administration.

Young: On looking at this, that same list would not be the list in all particulars, that your counterpart in the Reagan transition would have drawn up, that though it drew upon that experience, it did not imitate it. There was something different here.

Untermeyer: Well, the difference was that they—

Young: [inaudible] For example.

Untermeyer: Yes, I'll say one of the main reasons why the Reagan administration, especially in the beginning, was more ideological, was, of course, they had been out of power and had been insurgents, literally working to overthrow the existing government, namely that of Jimmy Carter. Many of them had not been in government before. Some who had been in the Nixon-Ford administrations were suspect, because that was seen as a more moderate to liberal era that was to be abandoned. So that some of the grumbles of people in the conservative movement about the Reagan administration were that there were these retreats of the suspect, discredited Nixon-Ford period, Rockefeller Republicans or, worse, Bush Republicans who were in those particular positions.

By the time we came along eight years later, we had the advantage of people who had upwards of eight years of experience in actually doing jobs in government. We could see who had learned to operate in that multidimensional challenging locale and able to be effective members of the Bush administration as well.

Milkis: Chase, I understand that President Bush didn't want to keep people in the same position. He didn't want to keep those people. If he wanted to retain them in government, didn't he want to move them?

Untermeyer: The slogan that was my slogan was, "New faces in old places and old faces in new places." Meaning that we wanted to keep people, but more than just a symbol of the fact that it was a new administration, it was also a way of giving people the excitement and refreshment of a new challenge. That's why when the Reagan administration at our request asked for people's resignations, they were also asked what position or positions they might like to serve in the Bush administration. And an effort was made to try to give those people that ultimate opportunity.

I say that President Bush was interested in those things. I didn't get to talk about the diversity angle. I don't know if the word diversity was used as widely in 1988-89 as it is today. It was basically just spoken of getting more women and minorities into positions. There was criticism of the Reagan administration that it didn't have a very good record in that area. Bush believed that he wanted to increase those numbers, not just because he wanted to give a contrast with Reagan, but because he believed that it was a requirement of a national administration to reflect the nation as a whole, not in any strict quota sense, but at least make, in the purest sense of the word, an affirmative-action effort to get people of all sorts into the administration.

This proved to be particularly difficult with certain Cabinet officers who were not bought into or who had not listened to President Bush's saying this, who were in effect saying, "Yes, yes, I understand all that but I still want my guy for my appointment." And I remember one Cabinet Secretary actually going to the Oval Office with a list of names of people who were women and minorities, for the assistant secretarial positions in his department, and President Bush saying, "Wonderful, that's exactly what I want." But as soon as he left the Oval Office, another list of names of other people who were not women and minorities were the ones that came through. In other words, this Cabinet Secretary basically lied to the President, or maybe the Cabinet Secretary had been lied to by his own staff in thinking that these were the names that mattered, whereas they were only there as suggestions, I suppose.

So, this became an issue, but I think the record reflects that the numbers did go up from the Reagan years for women and minorities to what became a new or then all-time high. The Clinton administration has eclipsed that, and I think that reflects proportionately the greater influence of women and minorities in the Democratic party, vis-à-vis the Republican party, particularly minorities. But that's fine. When I was asked, as I frequently was, what are the goals of the Bush administration in women and minorities, how many are you trying to get? I quoted Samuel Gompers, the founder of the American Federation of Labor, who said that what labor wanted could be said in one word: more. [*laughter*]

So we wanted more. And that was obviously a moving target, but we did not necessarily believe that we would be satisfied with any particular level and we certainly, because we didn't believe in quotas, were not shooting toward a particular number, but it would be clear if a Cabinet department, looking through the ranks of its appointees, was a little deficient in the areas of women and minorities, that that was an area in which to concentrate. And in some cases, in the case that I mentioned a moment ago of the Cabinet Secretary who either deceived the President or was himself deceived with this list, reflected that. It wound up being essentially an all Anglo set of appointees, which was contrary to what the President said.

Now, how does this happen? Why should clear policy of George Bush not be enforced in the first instance by George Bush? And that is because President Bush, not unlike most every other person who has served in that job, hates dealing in matters of appointments and feels correctly that they have more important things to deal with than who is going to be the assistant secretary of Commerce. Nevertheless, without the President speaking the speech and cracking the whip, with due follow-up from the Chief of Staff and in this case the director of Presidential Personnel, things just won't happen. And President Bush was not that interested in personnel. He cared about the governing matters I described a moment ago, but otherwise he didn't much care about those matters.

I remember in a telephone conversation to him once mentioning candidates who were the finalists for the Federal Communications Commission, clearly one of the most important of all federal regulatory commissions, one with immense impact on the national economy, and I tried to elicit from him which of these two candidates, the two finalists, that he favored so that I could send one the proper paperwork. President Bush said, "I really don't care, you decide." I almost felt like I should play high school civics teacher and say, "You were elected by the American people to decide. I was not elected by anybody, I just work for you. You were elected, you have the mandate, you tell me." But what he seemed to be saying was he trusted me or other sources of information that he was getting such that he would be happy to have my recommendation on who should go on the Federal Communications Commission, and so that's what I did.

In fact, as things turned out, in the course of just the two and a half years I was in that job, I got to choose the entire Federal Communications Commission. This was because Boyden Gray, who was very interested in regulatory matters, and we'll talk more specifically about his role and generally filling regulatory commissions, had recused himself from considering the Federal Communications Commission because of his investments in the area. So he kept hands off and because with regulatory commissions you don't have to worry about Cabinet Secretaries or other people, only panjandrum on Capitol Hill, which I'll mention, it was possible for me to be the one and only recommender of these things and with John Sununu's concurrence, then that was the name that went forth to the President.

The fact, incidentally, that I chose the entire Federal Communications Commission did not seem to dawn upon anybody on K Street in Washington that I should be hired for a communications type job in 1993, maybe because I didn't make more of the fact that I had had this unique responsibility. And, I must say, that in all of the pain and pressure of Presidential Personnel, that the greatest pleasure or excitement for a former political science student was that by designation

or by delegation, I got to exercise an important Presidential power, which was the power to choose people for federal positions.

Now, these were not Cabinet Secretaries or other headliners, but they certainly would have an impact upon federal government and, as in the case of the FCC, the larger nation. I never at any point believed that this was my responsibility, because I had read the Constitution, and it didn't mention a director of Presidential Personnel anywhere that I saw, but if President Bush was willing to trust me to make those recommendations and I had followed his guidance with regard to their ability and their ethical standards and the other things he cared about, then I could, with confidence, recommend somebody, knowing that in about 99.9 times out of 100, that individual would get the Presidential sign-off and be his choice.

Young: Sid, did you have a question?

Milkis: You may want to discuss this, Chase, when you get to Boyden Gray and regulation, but it is a slightly broader question. I want to go back to your discussion of why when you were looking for people who were more effective conservatives. You may not like that characterization.

Untermeyer: No, I think that's right.

Milkis: I understood that.

Untermeyer: I used the word "able."

Milkis: And I think that's very interesting. In some of those cases, though, were there not important departures from Reagan public policy, for example, Bill Reilly in the Environmental Protection Agency? He was certainly very different from Anne Gorsuch, but not only in being more mature and more effective as an administrator but also in the policies he pursued, or [David] Kessler in the federal Food and Drug Administration. So I don't know whether the proper way to characterize this is, some of this backfire in leading to departures from which you described as self-evident policy mandates.

Untermeyer: Well, the Kessler case—

Milkis: But it does seem like they are important departures to the point where the *National Journal*, I remember this, had the cover story, circa 1990 or something like that, "Bush: The Regulatory President," and so forth.

Untermeyer: Right. Bush never changed his policy with regard to regulation. However, I do believe that he never quite applied himself to ensuring that what he said was carried out by the rest of the administration. When you talk to Boyden Gray you will hear what I am merely quoting Boyden as saying, that he was, in fact, frustrated in doing this by Dick Darman, that Dick Darman was much more bent toward an active federal role in the economy, therefore a regulator, and, as such, the Presidential directives with regard to informing chairmen of regulatory commissions that they should be less regulatory, or even to give the administration's

view in a pending matter, never reached, I should say memos to this effect prepared by Boyden Gray never reached the eye of George Bush because Dick Darman somehow intervened to keep that from happening. It makes for a “yeasty” Washington story, and I defer to Boyden to say that if he is willing to, but I certainly heard him say that enough times to know that he made that point. So that there was a gap between what was said and what was actually done.

Now, of course, regulatory commissioners, not unlike federal judges, are people who are very hard to influence on particular cases after they get to those positions. In fact, there are greater restrictions on the ability of the executive branch to intervene on pending cases than for the Congress. It is one of the reasons why, one of the lessons Pen James taught me was never, under any circumstance, appoint the former aide to a Senator to be a regulatory commissioner, because in that circumstance, the regulatory commissioner will look to the Senator as the one who got him or her that particular job and because the Senator or Congressman, perhaps, might well use the power Congress has of influencing regulatory decisions to transmit a particular message to that regulatory commissioner different from the view of the administration, and for the most part I managed to carry out that particular wisdom of Pen James. When we talk in general about regulatory commissions I can give an anecdote or two. But this issue of enforcing a deregulatory attitude was difficult.

The choice of Bill Reilly to be administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency was, I think, a reflection more of the push of Bob Teeter during the transition. Neither Craig Fuller nor Bob Teeter received an appointment, full time, in the administration. They were made the co-chairmen of the transition, which largely meant they were involved, to a greater degree than was I, in Cabinet making. I think it’s a mistake to have two people in charge of the transition, in fact, to have two people in charge of anything, because trying to get a decision becomes twice as difficult, particularly in an environment, as the transition is, when there are so many meetings going on and it is hard to gather even one person, let alone two.

But Bob Teeter believed that the environment had been a sore area with the Reagan record, that that was a place that George Bush should make his mark. He had spoken of wanting to be an environmental President, and if so, then he wanted to have an attractive, effective individual to push an environmental agenda, and such a person was Bill Reilly.

I do not pretend to know the record of the Bush administration on environmental matters or even the week-in, month-out saga of what happened to that. I am aware that the general belief was that Bill Reilly was an activist, was a regulator, did see a role for the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] that was much more activist than the Bush administration, where the Reagan deregulatory philosophy held. It’s the nature of people being appointed to any job that they will want to execute that office with a vengeance, and sometimes that does put you athwart the policies of your own administration.

This is the old thing that Nixon referred to as “marrying the natives,” in which an appointee becomes convinced by the permanent staff to go pursue a particular line that might be different from what the administration wants. Reilly was able to also be very effective because he is one of the world’s most charming individuals, and the Bushes liked him personally and would have him and his wife frequently to dinner in the family quarters, where he indeed proved most

charming company. I think that provided a sort of a back door, literally, back door approach to the President that frustrated the likes of a Boyden Gray or other people on the staff who might have objection to some line of thought being promoted by the EPA.

So there was an internal conflict between those individuals like Reilly who were more activist and the words of the administration.

I didn't say very much about Cabinet making. Do you want me to do that now?

Young: Yes. I was just thinking that.

Untermeyer: Well, as I said, I was not involved in choosing all the Cabinet. Now, some were easy, predictable choices. Jim Baker was announced immediately as Secretary of State and we all know why he got that particular job. Nick Brady, a very close friend of Bush's, had been appointed Secretary of the Treasury by Reagan to succeed Baker when Baker resigned to head the Bush campaign. So he was retained. Likewise retained was Dick Thornburgh, the Attorney General who had been Governor of Pennsylvania, and was, if not an old Bush colleague, then somebody who was very simpático to Bush and his policies. He was retained, as was the Secretary of Education, Lauro Cavazos, a Texan and the first Hispanic Cabinet officer, who was given the job of Secretary of Education also late in the Reagan administration. Perhaps with Bush help or advocacy, I don't know, I wasn't around in those days.

So you start off right there with a good part of the Cabinet being predetermined. Bob Mosbacher very much wanted to be Secretary of Commerce. I think Jim Baker questioned whether he was fit for the Washington world and tried to interest him in becoming Ambassador to Britain, but he, Mosbacher, very much wanted to be a Cabinet officer and because of his intense and long-standing services in the cause of George Bush, by raising money going back as far as at least the 1970 Senate race, possibly even the '64 Senate race, and definitely all the Presidential campaigns, Mosbacher was due and was given what he wanted, namely Secretary of Commerce.

The job of Secretary of Defense was for John Tower. John Tower and George Bush of course being early compatriots in the Republican Party's wars for power in Texas, but of course John Tower was also the very astute, long-serving member of the Armed Services Committee. He was the chairman of the Armed Services Committee during the years that Republicans held the Senate in the 1980s. So he was eminently qualified for that job. He very much wanted it and without any question he got it.

There was a warning raised in an early meeting, one of the only larger scale Cabinet-choosing sessions to which I was invited, about Tower, and it was raised by Nick Brady. I should say that this meeting was held in the office in the Old Executive Office Building, which Bush occupied toward the end of the Reagan administration. The ceremonial office of the Vice President, the old Secretary of the Navy's office, was being restored to its original high Victorian glory, and as such Bush's Vice Presidential working office, as opposed to his West Wing office, was in the Executive Office Building a floor below. I think it was Room 180, and this was the famous Nixon hideaway office in which many a Watergate conversation occurred. It was also the scene therefore of a lot of Cabinet discussions in the transition of '88-'89. At this meeting, as I recall,

were Bush, Vice President-elect Quayle, Baker, Nick Brady, Teeter, Fuller, and I. There was general discussion about the Cabinet. This may have been the first such discussion.

At that time Nick Brady raised an alert about Tower. He knew he probably couldn't argue Bush out of choosing Tower, but Nick Brady had, for about ten months in 1982, been United States Senator from New Jersey. After Senator Harrison Williams resigned from the Senate because of a scandal, Brady was appointed Senator by the Governor of New Jersey. He didn't seek the seat when it came up for election and he left, but he had used his time in the Senate to get to know the institution and many of the members, and he knew for a fact that while John Tower was one of the most senior and powerful members of the Senate, he was one of the least liked. And the notion that a U.S. Senator nominated for a Presidential appointment would of course be confirmed by his colleagues was something that struck Brady as not necessarily so, as proved to be the case.

It was also at this time that the name of Jack—

Young: Was the Vice President-elect at this meeting?

Untermeyer: Yes, he was.

Young: Did he give any indication?

Untermeyer: Quayle was much more positive on Tower. He had served on the Armed Services Committee with Tower, and I think was so much an admirer of Tower's knowledge in the area that he supported him, and of course he also knew what Bush wanted. I just don't remember his confirming or denying Brady's particular comment.

Young: I wonder whether this was new information to the President. It's a detail, but—

Untermeyer: I doubt it, just because George Bush had been—

Young: [inaudible]

Untermeyer: But I don't think anybody, even Nick Brady, knew quite the fury of the storm that was to come in when even some Republican Senators, like John Warner, voted against Tower's confirmation.

In any event, the other thing that took place at this time, I remember, was the floating of the name of Jack Kemp to be Secretary of HUD. I claim some credit for this, but I do believe it was Dan Quayle who first raised the point and then I echoed it. The reason I thought Kemp would be an excellent choice for HUD is because of something, a notion that I came to have, called an entrepreneurial approach to Presidential appointments. That is, you take an area in which the President has little or no interest, such as housing policy, and you choose somebody who is going to throw himself/herself into that area, and as long as that individual stays on the reservation, which appeared to be the problem here, then you get an activist who can really do something for you, the best example being that of Bill Bennett as Ronald Reagan's Secretary of Education.

Reagan really wasn't interested in education policy and Bennett was, and with Reagan's blessing, because he did everything within the context of Reagan policy, became a very active and successful Secretary of Education.

I thought Kemp could do the same thing in HUD, and I think purely on the basis of housing policy he did. He put together a very effective team and with his characteristic energy threw himself into it. The problem was that Kemp could not resist getting involved in broader national policy, especially foreign policy, and for that reason made himself an unwelcomed member of the administration. There still are some chuckles and rueful looks whenever the name of Kemp is mentioned. I've always said that I'm a deep admirer of Kempism more than I am of Kemp. Jack Kemp truly is very eloquent and clearly believes in the promise of America and the role all Americans play in creating the richness of the country and the abiding, living presence of the principles on which the country was founded. He gives truly a beautiful talk on this matter.

But you cannot separate Kemp from Kempism and that proved to be the problem. Not that there were any scandals or particular problems at HUD, it's just that Kemp proved to be a very difficult member of the team and not a real team player, and as I indicated he clearly was somebody who was hard to work with on Presidential appointments because he very much wanted his own people in the subcabinet appointments. Because he didn't have the same political stroke of a Baker or a Brady or a Cheney, it was harder for him to win those battles because his natural ally, you'd think of John Sununu, was probably the most frustrated about having to deal with Kemp all the time. But, plus or minus, whatever Jack Kemp proved overall to the administration I think he was a good choice for HUD, otherwise it would have totally slumbered along in that administration.

There were other people who were chosen as much, I won't say haphazardly, but with less philosophy attached. Interior historically goes to someone from the West. President Bush personally wanted Manuel Lujan, a friend of his from Congressional days. I don't think Manuel was a member of the House class of '66, but he had been elected about that time, '62 or '64, and become a friend of Bush in the House. He had been ranking member of the Interior Committee. He had stepped down after many years in the Congress in 1988. He was available and from a western state, New Mexico, so he was a very good choice.

The departments that proved to be trickiest were, as it turned out, the Veterans Department and Energy Department. Bob Teeter, Craig Fuller, and I had most of our Cabinet meetings on how to find somebody for the Energy department. Herein lies, I think, one of the great lessons for me out of the transition, and I refer to it as "when the obvious is not obvious." And that is that when you are dealing with so many jobs in a very high pressured time with all kinds of distractions, meetings, and interviews and telephone calls from various important people to which you are constantly in motion and constantly reacting, things that in a moment of reflection would seem so clear and so natural just somehow don't happen. It's the reason why I have recommended to the people in the George W. Bush campaign, such as Josh Bolten, the director of policy, that he write down all the names of the people who have helped out in his effort for policy-making. Not just that this would be the new "silent committee" list, but just so that it's there. And he may say, and he's a pretty smart fellow, that of course I'll remember these people, but in fact when

transitions take place, you forget those who you would imagine to be unforgettable. I can mention two cases, one of which concerns the Department of Energy.

We tried, by which “we” I mean Fuller, Teeter, and I, to try to find somebody who could fit the bill as Secretary of Energy. Jim McClure, the retiring Senator from Idaho, did not want the job. I think Bush very much wanted him there as an old friend, but McClure declined. And we began chasing some other rabbits, people who had been involved with the Federal Power Administration or some other agencies in the West that Interior and Energy touches, without any particular success. So it was truly an occasion of Craig, Bob, and me sitting around the table one evening and talking about this matter, and somehow or another I started off on a small discussion in which I said that coming out of my Navy Department experience I was always impressed by the fact that some of the most outstanding leaders of the American government were four-star admirals and generals in the major commands around the world, like CINCPAC [Commander in Chief Pacific] and SACEUR [Supreme Allied Commander Europe], etc. People who, at the very peak of their power, had to retire and not just retire from a four-year term in that command but also leave the uniform of their country. That’s the end unless they become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, or in some cases service chief. And I felt that this was a great waste of resource.

At that point Craig Fuller said, “What was the name of that admiral who was in charge of the AIDS commission?” What he meant was Admiral Jim Watkins, the former chief of naval operations, whom I had known in the Navy Department and who was a nuclear power engineer, had been in the Navy dealing with nuclear issues for all those years in addition to being an extremely able man with a great deal of experience at the highest levels. The name went forward, Jim Watkins, and merely to suggest that name to the President-elect was to get Watkins the call and he accepted. Now, looking back, it seemed so obvious that Jim Watkins was the sort of person you should think of at a time like that, but as I say, and during the transition in particular, the obvious isn’t always obvious.

The other name I would mention would be that of James Lilley, who I mentioned earlier had been the CIA station chief in Beijing when George Bush was there in the mid ’70s. A man who had been born in China of American parents working there, spoke Chinese fluently, who had of course done many great deeds in his days in the Agency, whom George Bush had promoted in the Reagan administration to be the de facto Ambassador in Taiwan and then the actual Ambassador in South Korea, and it seemed obvious to me that he would be George Bush’s Ambassador to China.

But in one of these evening conversations in the hideaway office in the EOB before the inauguration, when Bush and I were talking about ambassadorships, he said, “Who are we going to get to go to China?” And I was so astonished at the question. It seemed clear to me it was Jim Lilley, and I thought it was a trick question. I thought, has Jim Lilley told him he doesn’t want to go to China, or does he not like Jim Lilley for some reason? I rather tentatively sent forth the word, “Well, what about Jim Lilley?” And Bush said, “An excellent idea, he’d be perfect for China.” *[laughter]*

Here’s an example where the President himself, the one who is supposed to make these appointments, needed to be reminded of something that was to me obvious, but in that moment

wasn't obvious. It is the reason why, and in that little personal anecdote I mentioned, why the would-be appointee himself or herself needs to make the phone call sometimes. Because to wait for the phone to ring presumes that the ringer is going to really be thinking of you. And it is not that they're against you, it's not that they might not have the proper confidence or think that it's a marvelous suggestion that you should be in that job, it just may be in the thousand distractions at that time, the two points have not connected. So those are two cases I can think of where it happened.

Back on the Cabinet, last one I'll mention, about how names can suddenly occur, it was in a similar late evening conversation when Fuller, Teeter and I were trying to figure out who would be head of the brand new Cabinet-level Department of Veterans Affairs. There'd been a Veterans Administration for seventy years, but as a result of legislation at the end of the Reagan administration, this was to be elevated to a Cabinet-level department. An example of how Ronald Reagan came to office vowing to do away with Departments of Education and Energy and wound up with two more departments at the end than at the start. At least one more, excuse me, Veterans Affairs. In any event, that was the job.

We were thinking of people, trying to think of people, and Bob Teeter said at one point, "You know, when you step back and look at the Cabinet, what we don't have here, thinking now from the point of view of diversity, is an ethnic Catholic. And that was a very important group for Ronald Reagan and George Bush and we just don't have anybody who fits that case." Well, bing, a bell rang in my mind, because Ed Derwinski, former Republican Congressman from Chicago who was a pal of Bush from Congress days, left the Congress, gone to the State Department at the end of the Reagan administration as an assistant secretary or under secretary, had telephoned me. I took his call because I knew Derwinski's importance to Bush, in which he signaled an interest in serving in the administration.

He didn't ask to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Maybe the idea never occurred to him, but Derwinski came to me, because as I said, it was the connection of a point, namely Derwinski existing and expressing his interest in serving and Teeter's mentioning that we might just have need of an ethnic Catholic. I went to the shelf, pulled out the *Congressional Directory*, flipped to an old entry describing Derwinski and yup, he had been a veteran, so that suggestion went forward and the call was made and Derwinski was pleased to accept.

So that's often, I won't say the haphazard way, but the serendipitous way in which decisions like that are made. I didn't go through the whole Cabinet, but I wasn't involved in all those decisions. It was mostly Craig Fuller and Bob Teeter speaking to Bush. As I said, their real function during the transition was not to run the apparatus or even to deal with personnel actions I was involved in so much as it was to be there with Bush in the hideaway office on Cabinet and other decisions.

Karaagac: It seems as if comfort level between appointee and President was extremely important, perhaps far more than, far, far up on the list compared to [inaudible]

Untermeyer: I've often observed that George Bush was probably the first President since Franklin Roosevelt or even before who was acquainted with all of the members of his Cabinet before he named them. Which is not always the case. Various Presidents, famously John F.

Kennedy, or Bill Clinton, were given names of people who on paper looked good and either proved to be great winners like [Robert] McNamara was for Kennedy or losers in more cases than that. In Bush's case he had known all these people, he served with them in administrations or in Congress in the past and, as you say, the comfort level was there. Kemp was a special case, but he did know him since they had opposed each other in the Presidential primaries of '88.

Karaagac: Were you conscious in '88 and early '89 of a mandate, or did the election give you a springboard or not giving you a springboard, to guide the appointments?

Untermeyer: I won't say that. If I say no, it doesn't mean I was unaware of it, because as I said, I had the belief that appointees are a reflection of a mandate. But I was dealing less with the *what* than the *who*, to use my own phrase there. It was up to others when we chose people to remind them just what the President-elect had said on a particular issue and which presumably the American people endorsed by voting for him even if they weren't consciously thinking of what federal drug policy or energy policy should be in the voting booth.

Milkis: I may be the only one who's interested in this thing you skipped over, but I spent a lot of time studying the bureaucracy and I'm wondering about the Schedule C project. If you don't think it's worth going into, skip it.

Untermeyer: No, it was very important. First of all, to define. The Civil Service statutes say there is a Civil Service System and people advance by merit, except as listed in Schedules A, B, C. Schedule A and Schedule B tend to be more obscure. They have to do with people with special qualifications who can be taken into government jobs without having to go through the competitive process, and that is something with which I personally dealt very little. But Schedule Cs are those people who are brought the lower to mid-level positions of the federal bureaucracy up through the GS15 level and who are there to perform a, I think the phrase is, a personal service or have a confidential relationship with another political appointee, usually a deputy assistant secretary, assistant secretary, or other person holding a Presidential appointment with Senate confirmation. They have a "special and confidential relationship" may be a phrase that the law lists.

Schedule Cs typically are younger people who serve with titles like special assistant, who work for Presidential appointees with Senate confirmation in Cabinet and agency jobs, and are hired, not by the White House, they are not Presidential appointees, but rather by the agency head themselves. Under the law, the Office of Personnel Management [OPM] governs this particular process, and because of the importance of OPM in giving the authority first of all for the creation of a Schedule C position and then for the approval of a particular individual to fill that spot, it is absolutely essential for any White House to have a loyal, trustworthy friend as the director of the Office of Personnel Management.

I have often said that when Constance Newman, Connie Newman, agreed to become the director of the Office of Personnel Management for President Bush, that 50 percent of my worries were immediately lifted. Well, such were my worries that that still left a lot to worry about. It is true that by having a very knowledgeable and impressive, effective leader like Connie Newman, who herself had started off as a lower-rated GS worker, as a secretary, early in the start of her career,

to be there in charge of the federal Civil Service, was a very fine appointment. She proved to be absolutely helpful to the White House Presidential Personnel office on matters such as the creation and naming of not just Schedule Cs but also the creation and filling of jobs in the non-career Senior Executive Service. This is the next level up and normally or typically applies to jobs entitled deputy assistant secretary, which are not Presidential appointments but are secretarial appointments.

Nevertheless, the custom is that the Office of Personnel Management does not approve someone to be in a non-career SES or Schedule C slot without White House clearance, without approval. White House clearance, as often as not, is a veto more than it is a promoting of someone for a job. In a moment I'll get into the difficulty often of promoting individuals to be Schedule Cs, because to say again, it is the Cabinet Secretary who actually does the hiring, the appointing, but still the White House has a major role.

I paid no attention whatsoever to Schedule Cs at the start of the transition because all of my focus, everything was being beaten into me with increasing frenzy, was about Presidential appointments, particularly the subcabinet because Cabinet officers were being named and they were coming forward with the résumés of their friends and long-time aides and we had no other names to promote other than what came in through the mail bags. It was a very difficult period accordingly and there was nothing new that I needed in my world, but I received a call from Lee Atwater, who had an office in the transition headquarters.

I went to see Lee, whom I had known as far back as the first year of the Reagan administration, and he told me that we needed to get on to do something about filling the Schedule C jobs. That's because he believed and knew that there were hundreds of people, mostly young people, who had worked hard in the campaign, some without pay, low pay, no pay, no sleep for the most part, working the primaries in the various states, doing all kinds of jobs from being drivers and baggage handlers to advance men and press aides, who were expecting to be remembered in the administration. These were people who certainly deserved consideration but weren't necessarily of the level and seniority of the people on the silent committee list but still were loyal troopers who needed to be remembered.

For Lee Atwater, this had a personal meaning. He had been, in the early days of the Reagan administration, aware that the people who had worked hard for Ronald Reagan were being forgotten when Pen James, like myself eight years later, was focusing on the PAS, Presidential appointments for Senate confirmation jobs, and not the Schedule C positions. And here are people who were running out of money and wondering if they were going to get a job and whether they should go back home instead. So that when these people let it be known to Lee, who they knew was a campaign operative, and when he realized there was a big growing problem, he and Lyn Nofziger, the ex-Reagan governorship press secretary who became the political director at the start of the Reagan administration, the two of them went to Pen James and they basically said, we know you have a big problem on your hands with the Presidential appointments. We will tell you there is another problem, which is to take care of all these Schedule Cs, and we will do that job for you. We will take charge of making sure that these things happen.

Pen James was happy to let them handle this portfolio, which they did. They went forth and worked up a system to take care of, to identify and to try and find places for the Schedule Cs. Lee told me that that was something that the director of Presidential Personnel ought to do and that we needed to start a project to identify and then place the young people for the most part who were going to hold Schedule C positions. Well, when Lee Atwater said something like that—I left out an important fact. And this had particular passion with him, not just because he felt a sense of comradeship with these young people who had helped elect Ronald Reagan in 1980, but he himself had worked in the campaign, back in South Carolina, of a dentist named Jim Edwards who was elected Governor of South Carolina, I think in 1974, one of the few Republicans to be elected to anything in the Watergate year. Lee Atwater had been a basic political operative and expected that when the man he elected got elected Governor that he would get a job. He, in his innocence in those days, literally sat by the phone, waiting and waiting for it to ring to tell him that he would be employed and have a job.

And it was this mental picture of Lee Atwater sitting in a darkened apartment devoid of any furniture except maybe a bedroll or a mattress and a telephone, waiting for the telephone to ring. He did get hired by Edwards and life turned out all right for him, but it made him a great believer that you had to remember those who had worked for you as had other young people in the Bush campaign. Well, advice well taken. So I had to create a project and if Lee's telling me was important from the point of view of recognizing that this was an entire new continent that needed to be explored and developed, my contribution was to come up with exactly the right person to hit it and that was a young man named Scott Bush. Scott Bush is the son of William H. T. "Bucky" Bush, who is President Bush's youngest brother and lives in St. Louis.

Scott Bush had been involved in the Bush campaign. He had been right there in the trenches during all kinds of campaign work, the same as people his own age who were wondering if they would be remembered for jobs in the administration they helped elect. I asked Scott to take charge of the Schedule C project. He proved to be excellent because he had immediate credibility, because he was of the same age and experience as these hundreds of folks who were clamoring for consideration. And because he was a royal Bush, his word could be accepted as final and not subject to any intrigues or additional problems. He's also a very capable young man who by virtue of the fact of being the President's nephew couldn't get an appointment of his own, so he could be the honest broker in all this.

It turned out he was later hired by the celebrated Fred Zeder over at OPIC, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, which is technically not a federal agency and therefore Scott was not precluded by the federal nepotism statutes. So he was taken care of. But especially during this period he could speak with great credibility of having been there himself, being a member of the President's family and of not being conflicted by similar ambitions of his own.

We gave Scott the job, and he went for it. He got the names of all these people, many of whom were working temporarily in the inaugural committee and some weren't working at all. We figured out the allocation or potential allocation of Schedule C slots by department. We worked out an allocation of Schedule C slots per department and then it fell to me in a celebrated time, to go before the Cabinet in the first meeting in the Cabinet room, and tell them in effect what they would all be expected to do. Now, this was semi-successful. That is, I think President Bush and

Governor Sununu got very nervous about the White House, me in particular, in effect assigning people to their departments. Nothing illegal or illicit about it, but still, this was the official family. They were put in charge of their departments, and the idea was not to be dictatorial toward them.

Of course, Cabinet Secretaries, particularly those who had political experience of their own, like a Jack Kemp or by extension Elizabeth Dole from her husband's recent campaign, had lots of young people they wanted to take care of too. So that there was a negotiating process there but it led for the most part to people being remembered, and many of these people were of the silent committee list, the kind of people George W. Bush had met during the course of '87-'88. So this Schedule C project, with the bumps that I described notwithstanding, proved to be very successful. It is one of the things I am happiest about in the transition period and I certainly was always grateful to Lee for alerting me to it.

I should say, when we are talking about this business of the Cabinet Secretaries and the people they want, that that proved to be particularly difficult with regard to someone like Elizabeth Dole and Jack Kemp, because of course the kind of people whom they wanted to put into high-level positions had been people who not only did not support George Bush for President, they were supporting an opponent of George Bush for President, and when any President names former rivals or in one case, the spouse of a rival to an appointment, you assume that that individual will want people who came out of their political world rather than the President's. So some of the most difficult struggles over Schedule C and non-career SES appointments did come vis-à-vis Secretaries Kemp and Dole, but that was to be expected.

Milkis: Is this an appropriate time to reflect a little bit on Atwater and his importance to the administration and how you think his illness affected the Bush Presidency?

Untermeyer: I've always given Lee the highest credit for what he did for George Bush politically as far back as 1985 when he became the head of the Bush for President operation. It was known at the time, he may have had some title like political director of the entity that was created, the name of which I forget, but whatever it was, that was his role, being the chief strategist at that point. His great contribution was that he convinced Vice President Bush that he needed to reach out to movement conservatives, the people in the anti-abortion, gun rights, and other issue causes, who had been major supporters of Ronald Reagan over the years but for various reasons had not felt very comfortable with and outright distrusted George Bush.

Coming out of the attitude I described earlier in which Bush felt very estranged from movement conservatives going back to his own days in Texas and the beating he had taken over his membership on the Trilateral Commission or being a preppy Eastern elitist, etc., during the campaign against Ronald Reagan, he was very much disinclined to court movement conservatives like the Young Americans for Freedom or the National Conservative Political Action Committee or the Heritage Foundation and so many other groups who were enthusiastic about Ronald Reagan and doubtful about George Bush.

This was the self-fulfilling prophecy, however. That is, if he never made any effort toward them, then the hostility would increase and grow. It seemed obvious to me that they were an important

bloc in the Republican Party, who any future Presidential candidate would certainly want to have and which he himself, with famous unsuccess, didn't have in 1980. But in the early days of the Vice Presidency, when I was the political guy and trying to encourage him to go make speeches to these particular groups, he would always dismiss these by saying, "Those people have never been for me and they never will."

Well, Lee Atwater was able to surmount that attitude and to get Bush to go speak to those groups and to make them see that he was a good guy and that he did loyally follow Ronald Reagan and that he might well be trusted with the Presidency even if they might be more enthusiastic over somebody else. Maybe Bush would win and that somebody else wouldn't. So at the very least they would accept Bush, and at the very, very least, they wouldn't necessarily give their support to another candidate such as Jack Kemp, who for many years in the early '80s was thought of as the natural heir to Ronald Reagan. And Lee's doing this proved to be extremely effective. Now, some people were upset over it; the most famous dyspeptic was George Will, who in early 1986 wrote a column in the *Washington Post*, syndicated, in which he described with great disgust what George Bush was doing to court all these groups, and he used the phrase that Bush was like a lap dog—he was trying to cuddle up to these particular groups.

I think the reason George Will was so upset was that he recognized that this was exactly what Bush did need to do to become President and was succeeding at it and might well become President, which was what Will did not want. And to the extent he could ridicule it, I'm not sure before which audience, that he would. When I say before which audience, it seemed to me that the conservative movement appreciated the attention and responded, if not enthusiastically, then well enough so that Bush was able to win the nomination. I give elemental credit to Lee Atwater for doing that.

Atwater in the Bush administration was the chairman of the RNC [Republican National Committee], and he performed the basic role expected of that job. It is always difficult to be the chairman of the in-party but Lee, because of his relationship and because of his essential activism, was a very positive force. He was interested in some regard on personnel matters and had some preemptive strikes here and there. One, two that come to mind. One is when he convinced me early on that we should retain as chairman of the Board for International Broadcasting one Steve Forbes of New Jersey, who had been named to that job originally by Reagan, and made good political sense to do that. So I agreed and Bush eventually agreed, so Steve Forbes kept on in that job, which in my subsequent life as director of Voice of America had its own special impact, making me wonder why I ever agreed to it, but the fact is that it was going to happen and I just was astute enough to realize that and to support it at the critical moment.

The other thing that Lee did, he concluded, correctly, that Hispanics needed to be much more visible in the Republican Party and that we needed some high-visibility Hispanic appointees. One in particular he had in mind was of [Catalina] Cathi Villalpando to be the Treasurer of the United States, which is a substantive job but is best known as the person whose name is on the money. He convinced President Bush at a lunch that Cathi Villalpando would make an excellent Treasurer. President Bush was acquainted with Cathi who was a wonderful, vivacious personality and, in effect, did say yes. And I got a telephone call from Lee immediately after the

lunch saying, “The President has decided that Cathi Villalpando is going to be the Treasurer of the United States.” I confirmed that that was indeed his decision.

The person who was left out of all this was the Secretary of the Treasury, Nick Brady, who had in mind somebody else for the position and felt that he had been outmaneuvered, which was absolutely true. *[laughter]* So Lee got Cathi there, unfortunately she fell afoul of the law, was I guess the only member I’m happy to say, of the Bush administration to go to prison. I forget the exact details; it had something to do with influence peddling with a contractor seeking federal assistance of some sort. Whatever it was, she was there because Lee Atwater made sure that she got there.

Lee died in 1991. I contend that had he lived that he would have been of immense help to President Bush in figuring out what to do about the three gents who bedeviled George Bush in 1992, namely Pat Buchanan, Ross Perot, and Bill Clinton. Each of those came from an element of American political society Lee Atwater knew very well, certainly knew far better than George Bush and the rest of us, and I have no idea what counterstrategies Lee would have recommended, but he would have had one. Now, whether it would have made any difference because of zeitgeist is another matter.

In fact, when in Kennebunkport during his own oral history, President Bush was asked the question of “Don’t you think you were hurt in your reelection by the fact Lee Atwater died?” said no, that he believed that misperceptions about the economy and a desire for change undid him in 1992 and that was that. I also proffered my own notion of two other men who died who could have also had an impact. One was Mac Baldrige who had been Secretary of Commerce and died in 1987, and the other was Dean Burch, Bush’s great friend who had been Barry Goldwater’s campaign manager and chairman of the Republican National Committee who had died sometime in the early ’90s.

Bush conceded that yes, they too would have provided some additional thought and wisdom that he may have needed in 1992, but repeating himself he felt that he was dealing against a stacked deck to begin with and it wouldn’t have made that much difference.

Young: What about Sununu’s departure? He didn’t die but he was lost.

Untermeyer: Well—

Young: He’s very much alive.

Untermeyer: We’ll let that oral history speak for itself. I don’t think that that was as severe a loss, if only for one thing. Sununu was still around. He was available. Whether or not he was called for his advice, I’m sure he would have given it if the opportunity presented itself. So I think the absence of Lee Atwater was felt, whether it was crucial absence—

Karaagac: Why did President Bush not attend Atwater’s funeral?

Untermeyer: He did.

Karaagac: He was bone-fishing in Florida, wasn't he?

Untermeyer: You're thinking, you may be referring to something that you've seen fresher than I do. I remember—

Karaagac: You may be right.

Untermeyer: There was a big memorial service at the Washington National Cathedral, and I thought the President was there. So I stand to be corrected.

Karaagac: Was there a service in South Carolina?

Untermeyer: There may have been.

Karaagac: That was the one.

Young: Can we have a brief break?

[BREAK]

Untermeyer: How far had you gotten? I'm glad that you were able to pull back on the Schedule C project there.

Milkis: We're due to talk about the organization of PPO. Some of us, Jim and I, don't know what the Reagan model was, so we thought maybe we could talk a little bit about that.

Untermeyer: Yes, the Reagan model is pretty simple, in which there is a portfolio system: A group of associate directors of Presidential Personnel who handle clusters of departments and agencies and certain stray dogs and cats need to go somewhere so they go into that cluster. There were six of them and they were grouped roughly this way: national security, which means State Department, Defense Department, CIA, U.S. Information Agency, etc. This, while it seems like perhaps the biggest and most prestigious, was actually the least active because of the fact that we had people like Dick Cheney and Jim Baker dealing in personnel matters, and as often as not I was the one they dealt with rather than my associate director. However, on a week-in, week-out basis, the national security portfolio was involved in one of the more interesting bits of personnel work, which is putting together delegations to represent the President at various foreign events such as funerals, inaugurations, national celebrations of some sort or another. And this was a great opportunity to, in effect, do nice things for people, contributors, or long-time supporters, Governors, Congressmen, various other friends who might not want a full-time job or might want to be an ambassador but don't have any hope for that, but we can at least give them a little bit of foreign policy experience by sending them abroad.

I claim that I have had a major early role in shaping George W. Bush's foreign knowledge because he was sent as the head of the delegation to, I think, a celebration of the independence of the Gambia in West Africa. President Bush definitely liked to have members of his family head

these delegations because he knew that other countries value the family of the leader in a big way, a way that we don't fully appreciate in the United States. Fortunately, President Bush had a large enough family, not just of his own children but also his sister and his brothers, that he was able to tap on a large number of members of the Bush family to head delegations.

Looking back, it seems that George W. Bush should have been sent to a bigger country than the Gambia, but he just happened to be one that was there and available, and he went off to it with Laura [Bush]. I remember his reporting back two things from that trip. One is that in the lengthy wait for something to happen at the ceremony, he got into a conversation with the President of Nigeria about their boots. And the other was that he tried to get a smile out of Princess Anne, who was representing her family member, and he couldn't do it. And he told me, "If I couldn't get her to laugh, nobody could." So delegations were a prime need.

Then another cluster, a portfolio, was that of the Department of Justice, the Treasury and certain allied financial agencies of the government. Another was a human resources or social services cluster that included Departments of Health and Human Services and Education. Another was natural resources, primarily Agriculture, Interior, and the EPA. Another was Commerce Department, Transportation, certain other economic-related boards, and certain regulatory commissions that fall under those.

Then there was a sixth, which I confess at the beginning of the Presidential Personnel process I thought surely would be one of the smaller portfolios, and I was even willing to downgrade the rank of the person in it until I became aware that Boards and Commissions, the sixth portfolio, was actually one of the most active. It was clearly the greatest one in terms of number of entities because the advisory boards and commissions of the federal government number into the scores, if not hundreds, surely the number exists somewhere, and this is the great area for remembering people who helped the President, supported the President but don't want full-time jobs in Washington and might want to be on a part-time board or commission and sometimes a special-purpose board or commission set up for a particular responsibility to look into a problem the Congress has identified.

So that became not only one of the biggest, but the woman who headed that, [Jeannette] Jan Naylor, became my deputy after Ross Starek was appointed to the Federal Trade Commission in 1990. I should say that I was blessed with two deputies, not of my own choice. Ross Starek was the fellow I considered my deputy because he was the one who was number two in terms of Presidential Personnel in all the functions of these various portfolios and the staff, but I was also given another deputy in the person of Ron Kaufman.

Ron Kaufman was a long-time political activist and friend of mine, so I've always and have always enjoyed Ron's company and special zest and political knowledge. But the fact is that he wanted a position in the White House. His brother-in-law, Andy Card, thought that he would be good at Presidential Personnel. But I already had a deputy, so the problem was solved by creating two deputies, with the result that Ron became, in effect, the political agent in Presidential Personnel in charge of things like political clearances and fielding the calls and recommendations that came in from people on the Republican National Committee. He himself

was and remains Republican National Committeeman from Massachusetts, so these were all his peers and he was the natural one for them to call.

My concern was that Ron, who was a great operator, and cannot probably sleep more than thirty minutes per night, was spending all of his time doing deals, making swap-outs, and working plans with his friends and contacts, fellow political operatives who were in the departments and agencies. I never quite knew and I definitely was not ever confident I knew what Ron was up to, but he served a useful role. Clearly there is a need to have a pure political animal in that office to do things like political appearances and to return the calls from the state committee members and state chairmen. It's just that it should be a much more junior person, probably a Ron Kaufman fifteen or twenty years younger than the one I got, and a person who works for the director and takes care of the director's phone calls, particularly vis-à-vis political people.

Ron eventually became the political director of the White House and my problem was solved accordingly. But one of the great difficulties of doing Presidential Personnel work is having people who, as often as not, enfranchise themselves to deal in jobs. For the most part I didn't have that problem. There were certainly no other members of the senior White House staff who wanted to have anything to do with personnel, and it was left to me to enjoy it all to myself. But to the extent that I did have an ongoing source of some potential conflict and problems with a colleague, it was Ron in that role. There is no need to have two deputy directors of anything and definitely not in our staff.

I mentioned that we had an excellent staff of very harmonious people who were very dedicated, but also went at their work with a great deal of enthusiasm and fun, which you need considering the pressures and frustrations, attacks and unfair comments that fly around in the personnel world. We would meet frequently, it ended up being on a regular basis, about twice a week for general meetings in which we went around the table, reporting on what was happening in their portfolios. Earlier on it was much more frequent than that. Then I would have myself available to any of my deputies at any time by telephone or in person when they'd come by and talk in greater depth about candidates for jobs, about particular problems that were developing, about the need to pay attention to some particular opening.

This, I might add, was another lesson, a lesson by mirror image of my time in the Navy Department. Not to dwell on that, but John Lehman, Secretary of the Navy, had a very curious way of dealing with his subordinates, his assistant secretaries, admirals, Marine generals, etc. That is that he expected them to basically line up outside his office at the end of the day and wait around until they were summoned unto his presence, at which time then they had a chance to say what was on their mind. It was a very odd way of doing things, which put a maximum degree of power in Lehman's hands and in his executive assistant, a senior Navy captain, to deal with these people. It seemed to me highly unprofessional. I thought it should be enough just to make an appointment to be on somebody's schedule, and then you go in and sit down and have your chance at him.

When I made mention early in my tenure as assistant secretary that it was very frustrating, I wasn't able to get on his schedule, Lehman laughed and said, "I'll tell you what Henry Kissinger once told me (when Lehman worked for Kissinger), which was, 'If you think you need an

appointment to see me, you will always need an appointment to see me.” This struck me as Lehman’s unique way of handling it, and I had to deal with it at these meat market gatherings at the end of the day because that was the only way to reach him, but I resolved that for my own staff at Navy and then at Presidential Personnel, and for that matter later at Voice of America, I would always make myself available to members of my senior team—because if you don’t, not only does frustration arise and often as not decisions don’t get made or things happen you don’t know about, but at the same time, it’s the guaranteed source of information that the boss needs to find out what is happening. And if the boss in any way sends out a signal that he’s not interested, then as like as not the boss won’t find out what is going on and will tend to be surprised. So I couldn’t affect John Lehman’s way of operating, but John Lehman’s way of operating affected the way I dealt with my own staff. I made it clear that the important priority was to see them whenever they needed it.

We also created something that I labeled the “fallout” meetings. That is, if there is a particular job that’s open and two or three good candidates are in consideration, well, obviously, only one can get that particular appointment. But we might like very much the runners-up and rather than lose those people altogether, we would gather on a regular basis, I think it was weekly but sometimes maybe every other week, in fallout meetings in which the associate deputies would go around and they would talk about the good people they had who might be available. And if someone else working on a job would hear this and say, “You know, I have an opening that that person might be good for,” then they’d get together and exchange information and as a result good talent would not be lost.

This became more important after the great rush-and-crash of the early part of 1989, to when you could begin to think a little bit more rationally, plan a bit more normally, how to fill particular vacancies. As I mentioned, a rule I insisted on was that people in Presidential Personnel stay at least a year so that the knowledge would be continuous. That was followed. We did have other people on the staff, junior to the associate directors, who turned over more frequently. But as often as not it was for the good reason that they were considered so desirable that they were hired in the administration or elsewhere in the White House for other jobs.

One such fellow on my staff named Mark Paoletta, who worked as the assistant to the associate director dealing in the Justice/Treasury area, became so good at researching the opinions of judges that he was grabbed by Boyden Gray, the counsel to the President, and made his chief staffer on judicial appointments. So I was very glad when our people were considered so desirable that they would be grabbed by my colleagues or receive appointments on their own in the departments and agencies.

Ours was the biggest staff second only to the correspondence unit, which used a lot of volunteers. That’s because Presidential Personnel is a production job. There is a job of work to be done, and it requires not only doing the initial job but then continuing to do that job as vacancies occur.

There was the great outcry during much of 1989 about the slow pace by which appointments were made. I was never able to get over my story well enough. It was said that I could handle Presidential Personnel or I could worry about my public relations—I could not do both. The

story was that we had kept in place Reagan appointees who were continuing to serve and provide leadership, that those were not literally empty desks, and eventually the Bush appointee would arrive, having been checked out. They were first of all recruited, then checked out, got through the nomination and confirmation process, without any loss of actual leadership. But the press, checking boxes or names, jobs on a list, made it seem like those were vacancies that were gaping holes in the administration.

Young: Could I interject here? How do you suppose, there was a lot of material we read that documents this press campaign or whatever to show that things were moving slower and there's something wrong here. How do you suppose that story, who was inspiring that story, where was the story coming from, giving the press the idea for this? Was it disgruntled people? What is your suspicion?

Untermeyer: I will say that I was probably more responsible than anybody because I didn't know or didn't think that this would be a particular problem. For example, a very simple question, I do not blame any reporter for asking me this repeatedly, was, "How many vacancies do you have and how many have you filled?" As simple a question as it may be, it is very difficult to answer but it is answerable. The reason I say it is difficult is that there are all kinds of publications that will list Presidential appointments, but it makes it seem like one is the equivalent of the other. There is all the difference in the world obviously between an under secretary of defense and the head of the Harry Truman Scholarship Foundation, and yet those are both Presidential appointments requiring Senate confirmation on the list.

Clearly, there have to be priorities, and some things are going to be done first and other things are going to be done second. And yet, during the transition planning phase if I had known of this problem, I would have worked up the list of what the actual positions were by categories and which ones were available to be filled. There are some, after all, like ambassadorships, 140 or more, whatever the number is, which no President is ever going to name the first year of office and because ambassadors usually serve three-year tours of office. We only dealt, as I'll mention in a moment, with those non-career slots that were held by Reagan appointees. The rest were held by Foreign Service officers who might still have a year or two or more left on their tenure. The number of ambassadorships, 140 plus, whatever it was, was on somebody's list and when they were checking how many appointments have you made, would get some number that would be a fraction of that. And they would then calculate and say that 70 percent or 60 percent of the jobs remain unfilled in the Bush administration. Well, that required somebody, myself more likely than anybody, to have done that work ahead of time so that a sensible list in priority order could be done so that the press could more accurately report what was going on.

I don't believe for a moment that the press was trying to embarrass me or that they were being inspired by some disappointed seeker, so much as they just wanted the facts. It was such an amorphous fact—that is, the number of appointments to be filled—that what needed to be done was to hammer it down more and give it some shape. When the bell rang and we had to start filling those jobs, that was more important than dealing with the statistical issue and, unfortunately, it was more important than dealing with press inquiries. That's why I said I couldn't do both jobs. I couldn't head Presidential Personnel and stay on the phone all day answering questions from reporters. Reporters were very patient and they were happy to hear

from me and they quoted me, but it just took up a huge amount of time at a time when I had to meet with Cabinet Secretaries and meet with my own staff and return calls from Senators and go to meetings in the West Wing, etc.

It is the reason why one of the recommendations I have most loudly made about transition planning and dealing with Presidential Personnel is that there be assigned to the Presidential Personnel office, at least for the first year, a press aide, somebody whose total job it is to field those questions and whether the press aide does it or somebody does it and hands the sheet of paper to the press aide, to have the actual count of jobs in some priority order that will then give a bigger and better picture of what the situation is.

Young: Still, it is possible that this is one of those areas that people love to write a story about, whether it's warranted or not. I mean, everybody is looking for things that are going wrong as well as things that are going right. You know, the stories they make out of these things.

Untermeyer: You're right, it is—

Young: I think you're too modest, saying that it all traces back to you.

Untermeyer: I could have done more to stay out of trouble for myself, but at least a lesson was learned and it might be of help to others. It is an ongoing story. Any recent administration has been hit by the question of how long it takes to fill jobs. More typically it happens in a traditional transition in which it's a totally new party having to fill actual vacancies, e.g., Carter in '77, or Reagan in '81, or Clinton in '93. But it also affected us, and I correctly predicted when the stories would end, and that was on January 20, 1990. After that there was no news hook, that is, somebody did write a story a year after the inauguration, President Bush still has not filled x number of jobs. But after that there was no reason anybody should write that story.

I tried to come up with homely metaphors to describe what this was. I guess maybe I should say they were similes instead of metaphors, and I would say, if you have a lawn that you must mow, you have to start at one corner of the lawn and start mowing and mowing and mowing until you get to the end. And before you get to the end, if somebody wants to lean over the fence and point to the part you haven't mowed yet they could call you a lousy groundskeeper, but still you have to get to it.

The other homely anecdote I had concerned the painting of the Golden Gate Bridge, which as soon as it's painted has to start all over again because you've already worn out the paint at the front end. And that's why the job of Presidential Personnel is never ending, because by the time we finally got through 1989, there were resignations, people promoted, various other things may have happened to create vacancies again. It's just that at that point, when you can begin to take a breather and be more proactive on personnel matters, the number of vacancies is fewer.

Milkis: Did any of this have to do with the context in which you were operating; that is, one of divided government where you not only had a Democratic Congress but less support in the Congress than any President ever elected in history? Did any of that context affect—

Untermeyer: More related to the confirmation process, which we'll discuss and probably a few snide comments made on the floor and newsletters back home, but it was not really a White House versus Congress issue so much as it was press vis-à-vis White House, I don't know if you can say versus White House question. And I might add, and I'm not lambasting poor Marlin Fitzwater who had his own problems, but I do believe the impression I had was that I was pretty much by myself; that is, that this was my problem. It was not seen as the President's problem even though there were stories about his administration in the paper all the time, and that's the reason why I believe it is in the President's interest that there be a press aide assigned to Presidential Personnel because, predictably in the next administration and two or three after that, will be the same story of how many jobs do you have to fill and how well are you filling them and then all the stories about who is in those jobs and the problems that they encounter along the way.

Milkis: Was there a lot in the Reagan administration? Was there a press aide in the PPO office?

Untermeyer: No, there wasn't.

Milkis: There wasn't one there. I guess inertia does happen.

Untermeyer: It could be that they had access to one or that the Reagan press operation was more attuned to the personnel issue than I was or than the one I had. After all, Marlin Fitzwater did have a lot of other things going on in the administration that he had to pay attention to, and he probably would have said he was shorthanded. Speaking of shorthanded, I will say that because Presidential Personnel is a volume job and it is very much dependent on the number of bodies, pairs of ears, and the number of mouths that can be applied to telephones and interviewing and opening mail and looking at mail and doing various other functions that the more people you have working on the chore, the faster it goes.

It isn't just bureaucratic imperialism that leads me to say that I did not have enough people to do the job fast enough. I won't say "well enough" because I think people did their jobs very well considering the circumstance, but at the very beginning I truly believe there should be no stinting with the number of people to help in Presidential Personnel. Because the job needs to be done for its own sake, but also because of the fact it is a potential bad news story. In fact, I won't say potential, it is always a bad news story; it is just how quickly and how well you deal with a story. And yet, right in April 1989, at a time when these stories were all coming down heavier and heavier about empty desks in the Bush administration and x percentages being vacant, I was visited by Andy Card who told me that President Bush during the campaign vowed to cut the White House staff, and he felt it was time to start cutting the staff, and therefore my staff had to be cut in half.

Now, I'm sure Andy got this from Sununu, who may have gotten it from the President for all I know, but whatever it was, it was just the most appalling set of orders because it meant that whatever was being done at that point was going to take all that much more time to fulfill, at least to fulfill as well as we wanted and what we thought we were expected to do.

Young: This was an extraordinary cut, from seventy-five to thirty-six. Were you the only one contributing to the staff reduction?

Untermeyer: I think it was a shared burden but because I had the biggest or one of the biggest staffs, it fell hardest upon me as would be the case in budget cutting, the people with the most dollars are often the ones who make the most sacrifices to budget cuts. Well, that was the decision and we proceeded to get there, but it seemed obvious to me what the cost would be in getting there. So, when I was on a panel of the Heritage Foundation this spring and was asked the question of how large should Presidential Personnel be, I recalled [Abraham] Lincoln's famous riddle, which was, "How long should a dog's legs be?" And the answer is, "Long enough to reach the ground." I can't tell you exactly how big Presidential Personnel should be, but it should be big enough to do the job to the quality and speed that the President and Chief of Staff expect. If you cut back on the number of people, just the same as if you cut back on your standards, you'll suffer.

Young: But you're on the front end of the appointments, of the process. There are clearances, there is clearance time required. I mean, there are a whole bunch of time-consuming procedures that you must go through that no amount of staff in the personnel office is going to be able to speed up because they don't do those clearances. They don't do the FBI and all that. Or am I missing something here?

Untermeyer: No, you're right that the clearance phase is handled elsewhere, and I suppose now is about the time we could start through the process of Presidential appointments because I can speak to that in greater detail. There are three phases of making Presidential appointments: the selection phase, which is largely in the hands of Presidential Personnel; the clearance phase, which is the responsibility of the White House counsel's office; and then the confirmation phase, which, of course, is the province of the Senate.

Starting with the selection phase, which I oversaw, first of all, I indicated the source of names that we would get, especially at the beginning, came from various people with insistent voices, such as Cabinet Secretaries, important members of the Congress, particularly Senators, and members of the White House staff, members of the Bush family such as Jonathan Bush or George W. Bush, party leaders, state chairmen, national committee men and women, Bush campaign workers of various sorts who mostly put in their words to Ron Kaufman.

There was an outfit called Team 100, 100 standing for \$100,000. These were major contributors who agreed to give at least \$100,000 to the Republican National Committee, so-called "soft money" to help the Republican Party in getting out the vote in the 1988 election. Bob Mosbacher was in charge of Team 100; he became therefore the advocate of some of the richest of all Americans who were also very interested in, if not promoting themselves, but in promoting some of their friends for positions such as ambassadorships.

There was an interesting character in Miami named Alec Courtelis. Alec, I forget if he was Greek or Lithuanian, but he was an ethnic American in south Florida, made a lot of money in real estate, a devoted Bush backer who, once Bush was elected, wanted to be the advocate for a lot of other people like himself, wealthy men who had worked in the campaign, overlapped with

but not the same as Team 100. Alec Courtelis worked it so that he was able to head a particular group of people to help us develop names. Well, we were not short of names and I'm not sure that the extra development added to the quality and talent we were seeking. But Alec Courtelis and those in his circle could not be said no to. So Alec had a particular role and I had to add Alec Courtelis to my daily list of people I often heard from on the phone or in person, and he would bring forth particular people being sought. And sometimes those people made sense for jobs and could be helped, sometimes they made sense in other jobs, and sometimes they didn't make any sense at all.

But that's why I looked upon my role, as much as anything, of being the big ear in the White House—to listen to people and to pay attention and to act appropriately. Whether or not that's the way they wanted me to act in the first place. Especially in the beginning when there was concern we were not filling the jobs fast enough, John Sununu got quite nervous. I think he was ginned up by Cabinet Secretaries that things weren't moving fast enough, and he thought that what we in Presidential Personnel needed was more input from the White House staff. So he convened in the Roosevelt Room, gathering the senior White House staff—

Young: Even though there were fewer of them—

Untermeyer: I'm talking about my counterparts, the senior White House staff. Now, to their great credit, these were people I mentioned who had no ambitions to play in Presidential Personnel, they have their own challenges, and they were being kept away from their own needs and staff meetings and listening sessions in order to sit in the Roosevelt Room and try to brainstorm names. This lasted a little bit and then happily it was discontinued.

Perhaps, and I'm not saying this accusatorially, but maybe some of the White House sources quoted by press reports on the slow pace of appointments were from the senior staffers who saw what appeared to be a Presidential Personnel director hungry for names. I was told I had to have these meetings and had to ask people, "Do you know anybody who can be assistant secretary of this or that?" And then maybe somebody would think of someone or not, but as often as not these were fruitless meetings. Those were quickly discontinued and things became much more regularized through my staff. That did not stop the Cabinet from talking to the press and to each other and to Sununu about the slow pace.

Remember that many Cabinet officers wanted to promote their people for what they called "their appointments," and it suited their purposes all the more if the press was writing all these stories about the delays in filling particular jobs, that they could make the case to Sununu, there's no need for delay, you have my guy, a perfectly wonderful person, a hotshot, from the Wall Street law firm of this or that, or my brother-in-law says this woman is terrific, or this was somebody on my Congressional staff and I know they're a loyal Republican and I've got to have them.

And at that point Sununu, because he had to deal with the Cabinet, might well say, okay, that's it, and that would be decided at that point and the Cabinet Secretary would win, perhaps beating out some Bush loyalist or, for that matter, over nobody in particular. But once again we paid the price of not having done what Pen James recommended way back there in the summer of 1988,

which was to do preliminary work on personnel to have other names ready to go and maybe even pre-cleared so that they could be put into the system soon enough.

I remember one particular morning in early May, when I arrived at the White House West Wing for the 7:30 staff meeting. I walked in the gate maybe 7:28 to see my assistant, Betty Thompson, standing on the steps right next to the Marine guard. And I knew she wasn't there just to enjoy the sunshine or to give solidarity to the Marine Corps, but she was there because Governor Sununu needed to see me immediately. So I went into his office. He had been ganged up on by the Cabinet who were complaining about Presidential Personnel not moving faster on "their" appointments. It wasn't just me. Boyden Gray was also accused of sloth, and I'll discuss the clearance process in a moment, but this was one of those clinching moments when Sununu was whipsawed between one client group, namely the Cabinet, and his staff, namely myself, who he did loyally support and absolutely understand the pressures because he had been a state Governor, but clearly there was a problem and the problem would break into the press and stories would appear.

I said at the time that this was part of the price that he [President Bush] paid for wanting the quality and wanting people who were checked out, so there would be no surprises to come through the confirmation process. The subtext of that being that whenever any President faces a Senate in the hands of the opposite party, then he has to be all the more careful whose names he sends forward because the Senate is not likely to give him any credit or slack for people who might not have been thoroughly checked out. So, since we faced throughout all those four years a Democratically controlled Senate, it was absolutely necessary to thoroughly screen people before their names went up, particularly in the aftermath of the Tower episode.

That being the case, I said in many an interview that it was more important, and certainly it was consonant with what President Bush wanted, that we do a careful job rather than a fast job of filling these jobs, that I did not want in 1990 or '91 to read a story of some nasty scandal or other unpleasant fact about an appointee because I knew that that story would not have a paragraph that said, "On the other hand, the White House acted with admirable speed in choosing this fine citizen for appointment back in 1989." So you wouldn't have gotten any credit for speed at the time that things all fell in on us. Fortunately, that didn't happen and that justified it.

But I am convinced, and perhaps the subject of another session rather than today, that there is a lot that can be done to shorten the process, and the place that needs to have it shortened is the selection phase, the phase that is governed by Presidential Personnel. Lots of pieces, such as pre-election work and early clearance of prospective appointees, involved not necessarily people selected for jobs, but categories of people from the campaign or past administrations or other friends of the President who may well receive appointments, and if that's the case, get them to fill out their papers and have all that work done by the FBI, so that if they do get the call their names are that much farther ahead and ready to go off to the Senate. And there are other things that can be done to shorten the process as well.

In our time, starting from point zero on the day after the election, we didn't have the luxury of such additional assistance. The bane of the selection phase—Let me stop for a moment to just quickly say what the step-by-step process would be. We received the input from all those

different sorts of sources, I would hear about this with my staff. My staff would do the bulk of interviewing and when we got down to finalists or sometimes THE finalist, then I would interview that person. I took very extensive notes on those interviews in what ended up being a major library of spiral notebooks, just so I would have for my record, if not for history, what they said in response to questions about what they thought about that job. And on certain occasions when an appointee left the reservation and I was asked, "Well, what did he tell you when you interviewed him?" I was able to pull out the notes and say just what, in case he either misspoke or misled in that conversation.

Young: Excuse me, how would you do the interviewing? Did they come into your office, did you do it by phone?

Untermeyer: It was done in my office. I wanted to look at the people face-to-face, and they were always willing to come to my office. That was never a problem. At their expense rather than the government's expense, and sometimes, I won't say it was a formality, but I did want to look at the person and get some feel what they were like and ask those questions, if only because that person might well end up being the appointee, but it might be an alert that this is somebody to watch. Maybe they weren't as well prepared or they were a little shifty or maybe there was something that needed to be paid attention to or, on the contrary, they might be very outstanding people to be watched for promotion at a later time.

Whenever I reached the conclusion with my staff that a particular name was the name and sometimes it was our choice, sometimes it was a deal with the Cabinet Secretary, or sometimes it was a forced measure, edict from Cabinet Secretary that this is the person I want and I will have her, then I would take a decision memoranda, which were prepared for me by my staff. The decision memoranda was to be jointly signed by Governor Sununu and me, addressed to the President. Therefore I would go to see Governor Sununu with a stack of these decision memoranda, always in red folders. I mentioned that he did not relish these particular sessions but he did participate in them.

When he concurred with my persuasion that this person needed to be the one, he would then sign the memo and with a memo going forward to the Oval Office signed by John Sununu and me, President Bush almost in every case, or with so few exceptions that I don't recall and it's not really important, would concur and that person would be preliminarily selected for the job. I make that inference because their name would then go into clearance, the basic check to find out whether there were any outstanding warrants for their arrest or whether they were in arrears with the IRS [Internal Revenue Service], a so-called name check could be done. Almost everybody passed that. They would never get as far as my desk or John Sununu's or the President's if they hadn't been name-checked, but they hadn't been through the so-called full field investigation by the FBI at that point.

The President's preliminary signoff on that individual would start that particular process, which I will get to in a moment. I will now say that the bane of a director of Presidential Personnel in this whole process would be if names leaked out, as they invariably did. Sometimes the right names would leak out and that would create a storm unto itself. I remember the case of an individual whose name I'm sorry I cannot quickly recall, but I'll describe that this was for an assistant

attorney general position. It was a black Republican from Michigan, a man who had served as a sheriff in one of the major counties in Michigan and I should remember his name, but he was to become the assistant attorney general for civil rights.

In the political atmosphere of the day, this was, of course, the kind of position the Democrats would love to jump on, just as Republicans have jumped on Bill Clinton's selections for that same position and the name leaked out. Well, it leaked out in a way—

Milkis: Lucas?

Untermeyer: Yes, you're right, Bill Lucas was his name. A very fine man. But the fact is that he was a black Republican, and as we later saw in the great strength of the Clarence Thomas matter, black Democrats, or what could be called the civil rights community, find it unacceptable that people who are not of the same persuasion politically and philosophically as they be advanced. And, in this case, Bill Lucas was a black Republican, ditto Clarence Thomas, and therefore trouble was guaranteed.

Well, the name leaked out somehow, probably through the Justice Department, I'm sure. In fact, I now recall how it was, and it was that when the cry was rising that this very important position of assistant attorney general for civil rights was still vacant or empty, Attorney General Thornburgh himself let it be known that the name he was proposing to the White House was that of Bill Lucas.

Now, Bill Lucas was a very fine man and he deserved to have a place in the administration of some sort, but assistant attorney general for civil rights should not have been the one, not just because of the episode that followed, but just the fact I think he was better prepared to do other jobs such as law enforcement-related jobs as opposed to what is essentially constitutional law questions. I heard about this, not through a press release, not through a call from the Attorney General or anybody on his staff, it was a call from Jim Cicconi, the President's staff secretary, who was in his room in the Akasaka Detached Palace in Tokyo where President Bush was staying while attending the funeral of Emperor Hirohito.

Jim Cicconi had just turned on CNN and seen that Bill Lucas had been chosen to be assistant attorney general for civil rights. Jim's job was, of course, to monitor paper flow and he hadn't seen the name of Bill Lucas, and there was also some reaction to the Lucas name that was entirely negative and so it was a "what the hell is going on here" call. And I had to agree with him because I had no idea that this had happened, absolutely irresponsible of a Cabinet Secretary, especially one like Thornburgh who had been a Governor and was a very responsible man, to have done something like that, to tell the press the name you are going to propose to the White House. It should be a private process even though it never ends up that way. But he thought it would take some of the pressure off by letting out the name. Well, unfortunately it just added to the pressure. In the end Lucas was not nominated for that position and they had to go find somebody else.

But that's a good example of where a name correctly leaked can create a problem. Another instance, this also is the Justice Department, Thornburgh had not chosen a deputy. He wanted a

particular individual, in fact it ended up being Robert Fiske, who later was briefly the Whitewater special counsel, replaced by Ken Starr, but for now he was Thornburgh's choice to be the deputy attorney general.

Somehow the name leaked out and got into the papers and in a very curious twist of things, when all the reaction to Fiske came from conservative groups because Fiske had been very active in the American Bar Association. And either his committee or something connected with him had given negative ratings to favorite judges of the Reagan administration like Robert Bork or Antonin Scalia. When conservatives started objecting to Fiske, we found ourselves having to defend the name of somebody who had not been nominated to the Senate. In fact, he hadn't even gone to the process of getting to the President's desk in the first instance the way I described a moment ago. It was Thornburgh's choice and in that rather leaky department the name got out.

The curious thing is that normally nominees make the rounds on Capitol Hill after they're nominated. Fiske felt compelled to go make the rounds on Capitol Hill before he got nominated to talk to conservative Senators, to try to convince them he was really a good guy and he hadn't tried to undo the chances of Robert Bork.

Well, in the end, we did not nominate Fiske. So in many ways, the episode in that case, the leak, proved useful for flushing out problems that might affect a nominee. That's one of the plus sides of leaks, but politically leaks are always losers from the point of view of the White House trying to keep things unto itself.

The final thing I'll say about the selection phase, and I hinted at it earlier, is that occasionally a particular nomination would not be worked out between the Cabinet Secretary and me, or for that matter among the Cabinet Secretary, John Sununu, and me, in which Sununu would agree with me that the Cabinet Secretary's choice was unacceptable, in which case then the issue would go to the Oval Office, something President Bush I'm sure hated. It didn't happen very often but, and I was not present there, I didn't expect to be, because Sununu was Chief of Staff and he was the advocate for my point of view.

When these happened, Cabinet Secretaries as often as not won, because Presidents hire them to be their main people and ought to win, but those things tended to be quite wrenching when they occurred. But at least they were resolved when that finally happened.

The final thing I should say, maybe this is a final, final thing, I was amused often to read in the pages of the *Washington Post* on the federal page, where a lot of Capitol gossip was spewed, that "Here is the list of names known to be the short list for a particular position," and I would be flabbergasted, not because it was the short list, but because I had never seen any of these names before. They certainly weren't on any list that I had access to. I had no idea where the names came from, and I later came to believe that the names were there on the pages of the *Washington Post* because those particular individuals somehow got their names into the *Washington Post* under the assumption or pretense that they were under actual consideration and maybe it was a way to advance their cause if they truly wanted a nomination.

Sometimes I suspected it was so that the individual, let's say this individual is a Washington attorney, would be able to photocopy that article and send it around to all the clients and say, "I'm deeply honored that the White House is considering me for appointment to this high position. However, it is my desire to continue to stay here at the firm of Smith and Jones and serve your interests as well as I can in the world of this new administration," which would then make them seem as if they were very influential and certainly gracious enough to let the cup of high appointment pass from their lips and go on about their—

Young: Sounds a little like ambulance chasing caused the accident.

Untermeyer: So, I got over being flabbergasted or astonished about some of the things people would do in pursuit of appointments or in trying to keep other people from being appointed.

Once I mentioned President Bush had preliminarily signed off and somebody concurred with the original memo, signed by Sununu and me, their name would go into the clearance phase, which was run by the White House counsel, Boyden Gray.

During the 1988 campaign, President Bush had issued a statement on ethics. Ethics was a big issue, especially at the end of the Reagan administration because the Democrats made a lot of problems encountered by people like Ed Meese in particular. And in fact, Ed Meese had to resign as Attorney General toward the end of the Reagan administration because it was proving to be too great a political burden for George Bush. That's when Dick Thornburgh was nominated and appointed by President Reagan as Attorney General. The Democrats alleged that the Reagan administration was beset with sleaze and there was the phrase "sleaze factor" applied to the Reagan administration. Well, we clearly desired not to have any such allegation. It was an unfair allegation of the Reagan administration, but politics and the press being what they all are, we wanted to avoid any tag of "sleaze factor" applied to the Bush administration.

So Vice President Bush in his statement came out with an ethics policy, details of which I'm sure are easily available, but the one I remembered was he wanted to have an "ethics czar"; that is, a person, a single person on the White House staff who would be the enforcer of the ethical standards that President Bush expected to be carried out and which were mentioned in that same speech or press release.

As it got closer to the inauguration, Boyden Gray did not want to have another White House counsel in the West Wing. And he made the case convincingly that, notwithstanding this campaign pledge, that he should be the ethics czar and that was appropriate because that had been traditionally the role, at least I say traditionally, that certainly had been the case in the Reagan administration that the White House counsel was in charge of clearance. That should be the case. There should be a wall of separation between the choosers and the clearers because each had different roles.

So Boyden became the one to oversee this particular process, and he had a young woman who was his executive assistant in charge of gathering the names of people from Presidential Personnel and giving the blank forms for the White House and the FBI and the Office of Government Ethics, riding herd on those people to get them to submit their papers and then

farming those papers out to the FBI and the Office of Government Ethics for their glosses and their background checks. When the paperwork came back from those entities she had to farm them out to the associate counsels to Boyden Gray, who then would check over these and make their recommendation that this person deserved clearance or not, in which case Boyden would then likely concur and then the name could go forward again to the Oval Office for final approval by the President and nomination to the Senate.

This young woman, Diana Kendrick, was very attractive. I got to know her through that process. We met in the first week of the administration and romance developed in time, not immediately, but more toward the spring of the year, appropriately, when birds are singing and the pressure was slightly less and I actually had a social life, and, as things turned out, advancing the tape here, she is now my wife. Boyden Gray likes to tell the story with a little bit more color than it really deserves, how he deliberately used this romance to defend himself against angry outbursts from me that they were taking too much time in clearing people or overseeing the clearance process.

It is true that Diana was a helpful foil in all this, but Boyden and I were friends and colleagues. It wasn't very useful for me to be angry with him because it wasn't going to cause things to be any different. The pace was the pace, and there are certain institutional reasons why it took a long time. As I mentioned, partly it was due to the fact that the clearance process itself was so cumbersome, because if you deal with people who have a lot of money or have done a lot of things in their life, it takes longer to check them out and it takes longer for them sometimes to gather the data on their holdings or their spouse's holdings, which are needed by the Office of Government Ethics and the Senate committees.

So there was an institutional delay of the clearance process, wholly apart from the amount of time it might take the FBI at the start of an administration to background check everybody. I used to say that if I were a counterfeiter I would do my best business in Presidential election years when the Secret Service is all engaged in protecting candidates and not running after counterfeiters. And if I were a bank robber or engaged in some other chicanery subject to federal law, I would do it the first year of a Presidential administration when FBI agents are all spending their times clearing people for Presidential appointments.

Having said that, it is true that Boyden's office had a split need and the split need was to be the ethics czar, the overseer of the clearance process, and to facilitate sending these names out and getting them back and putting some kind of stamp, yea or nay, on those particular individuals. But they also had the legal work of the Presidency to do, the bread-and-butter work of the White House counsel, messages and vetoes and questions of Presidential prerogatives that had to be explored and defended.

But there was the additional factor that Boyden Gray was extremely interested in policy matters, particularly economic issues. He was very much involved in certain environmental matters, on disability issues, on civil rights. He had hired a very talented staff, many of whom had been clerks to Supreme Court justices. Boyden himself had been clerk to Chief Justice Earl Warren at one point, and these people, like himself, were interested in policy matters and there were a lot of policy issues in the administration. Boyden threw himself into these matters and he got his staff

to help him, and faced with a choice between doing something really exciting, like finding a justice for the Supreme Court or figuring out what the policy should be toward quotas, on questions of federal contracts or whatever the issue might be requiring the counsel's clearance versus checking over the papers of somebody being considered for a lesser appointment in the administration, the former won out and the stack of would-be nominees grew larger.

It led me to conclude that for a future White House, there is no problem whatsoever having a lawyer being a consigliere to the President, to give advice on policy matters, but that lawyer should not be the White House counsel. The White House counsel should still be the lawyer, the bread-and-butter worker, who is going to do the inbox, outbox work as well. And Boyden Gray confesses that he was much more interested in policy matters than in doing the ethics czar job, and in his very colorful way he said that to have a lawyer uninterested in policy matters in Washington would be like, he said, throwing a healthy seventeen-year-old boy into a room full of naked women and not expect him to have impure thoughts. *[laughter]*

So Boyden's thoughts were always on policy matters rather than personnel matters, and if he did use Diana to help stave me off from raising the outcry against the part of the general counsel, the counsel to the President, then he was right. But the fact is that Boyden did do the job and when names went forward, they had been for the most part checked over and there were no surprises. If you haven't talked to Boyden already, and you will, then he can go into more detail with some of his favorite anecdotes as to what happened there.

When the name received final counsel clearance, then the memo, at that point a pro forma memo, would go to the President recommending that the name of the individual be sent to the Senate, nominated, and the tradition or the practice adopted in the Reagan administration would be that you first issue an "intent to nominate"; that is, a press release would go out and say the President today announced his intention to nominate so and so for a particular position. That would usually precede the actual nomination by twenty-four hours in the event you had missed something and the outcry arose, you wouldn't necessarily have to pull back a nomination or have to fight for somebody who had a problem you weren't aware of. You could just not go ahead with your intention at that particular point. That remains the practice, I think, to the current day.

Let me say, unnecessarily for this group perhaps, that often the words "nomination" and "appointment" are used interchangeably in articles even by people who should know better, but there is, of course, a major constitutional difference between a nomination and an appointment. A nomination is the name of someone sent forward to the Senate for its advice and consent. Only when such advice and consent is issued does the Senate act to confirm that nomination. When the certification by the secretary of the Senate is received back in the White House or the clerk's office, then and only then does the clerk issue or present to the President a document, truly a parchment certificate, which is the appointment, the actual naming of that person to the job. This is for jobs that are PAS, Presidential appointments requiring Senate confirmation, which is the main line of jobs we're talking about.

There are certain pure Presidential appointments that don't require Senate confirmation where the President can just sign the document straight out, the most notable examples of those being members of the White House staff, the assistants, deputy assistants, and special assistants to the

President. But PAS appointments are appointments only after the Senate has acted on the nomination and given its consent.

We can now talk about the confirmation phase. Here is where our office, the Presidential Personnel office, did have the help of somebody borrowed from another staff, in this case the legislative affairs staff of my colleague Fred McClure. This was a man named Brian Waidmann who was an assistant legislative counsel. He had other duties in his office dealing with legislation, and appropriations that the administration cared about, but he was tapped by Fred McClure to do for me what I especially nowadays wish Marlin Fitzwater had been able to do with a press aide, and that is have somebody assigned to Presidential Personnel, sort of an adjunct staffer. Brian met with us when we had our staff meetings. He would report back on problems that some of our nominees might be encountering, and he would be there, as they say, in the takeoff phase for the nomination process, hearing about people, understanding what problems they have so that he was prepared to help that nomination on Capitol Hill.

Each of the Cabinet departments and the major agencies—in fact, probably all agencies—have somebody who handles legislative affairs, and you might expect that they would be primarily involved in helping to get somebody confirmed by the Senate. But for the most part, those legislative assistants, let's call them assistant secretaries for legislative affairs, would have other things to do and they would be taking care of their boss who was the Cabinet Secretary, when the Cabinet Secretary was called up to testify, they would be in charge of doing all the preparation of testimony and feeding the way, and a nomination might be a much lower priority for them, especially if that nominee was not somebody the Cabinet officer particularly favored in the first place.

Young: Were there instances in which the legislative affairs person, Waidmann, would alert you to some problems?

Untermeyer: Yes.

Young: Were there cases in which you didn't proceed on that ground? I'm not asking for names, I'm just trying to get a sense of—

Untermeyer: There were a very few nominees who ran into some trouble on the Hill where, because of something we either knew or didn't know about a nominee, a Senator or group of Senators had an objection. We'd be kept informed on that. Sometimes, as often is the case, the Senator wasn't against the nominee but wanted to get the attention of the White House on another issue and was using the nominee as a hostage. Or for some other political reason was playing around with the nomination. That sort of thing did happen, happens all the time in any administration, and that's where Brian was extremely helpful.

Young: Did you find that he knew his beat pretty well in terms of being able to spot problems that might develop?

Untermeyer: Yes. Brian was truly outstanding and—

Young: You didn't get many surprises.

Untermeyer: Nope, especially not as the administration wore on and we were dealing with fewer nominations to handle. So, as I said, Brian Waidmann could therefore be the advocate for the President's nominee on those occasions in which the assistant secretary for legislative affairs in a Cabinet department would not be pushing that individual. And it really makes a difference. The Brookings study of attitudes of past Presidential appointees said something that was eye opening and disappointing to me, which was how many of them felt abandoned once they were nominees, that they were not given enough help in the confirmation process, felt really alone. Maybe that was before the Brian Waidmann era, maybe it wasn't, but I could easily see somebody feeling that way if their own prospective department or agency's legislative affairs chief couldn't care less or maybe the Cabinet Secretary couldn't care less about whether they did or didn't make it and not giving them the kind of help. Because it does get rather lonely and the amount of time that passes for a prospective nominee or an actual nominee can be endless. Days seem like weeks and weeks seem like months and time goes by very slowly.

Happily, there were very few troubles that occurred in the confirmation process. There were just a few people whose names were actually withdrawn or were at the end of a Congressional session returned without action to the President. There was nobody who was voted down after John Tower. He seemed to inoculate the rest of the administration with his unfortunate rejection. We were often frustrated by the failure of Congress to act on particular people because of certain political problems and wanted the President to use the recess appointment power, which the Constitution gives the President.

As worked out during the Reagan-Bush period, a recess had to be a real recess, like the adjournment of the Congress after its session or even sometimes the shortest period might be summer recess if there were a very important nomination or appointment to be made. But President Bush was very reluctant to do this. This was because that wonderful man, George Mitchell, the Senate majority leader, did not want to give the administration any favors and one of them was to get very offended if the administration presumed upon the rights and prerogatives of the Senate to send up the name timely and to have the Senate go through its confirmation process.

So the idea was given that all right, you might do a recess appointment of somebody you want, but recess appointments are only good for the life of the following session of the Senate. And if the Senate fails to act on somebody, that appointment dies and there is a new vacancy. So that we were given clear word that if we, the President, exercised the recess appointing power, that individual might be in place, but would survive only to the end of the next session.

I do believe that Presidents should be more willing to use the recess appointment power, and I was most impressed when Mickey Kantor, let me see if I've got this correctly here, it could be when Ron Brown was killed and President Clinton gave a recess appointment to Mickey Kantor to be Secretary of Commerce. This was during a brief recess of the Senate. It was during an Easter recess, let's say, and there was no real reason for them not to expect the nominee to go through the hearing process with the Senate Commerce Committee, but for some reason the then

chairman of the Commerce Committee, Larry Pressler, allowed it to happen, to go through, raised no objection whatsoever.

Pressler was in Houston, raising money, as of 1996, about the time this happened and I asked him, I said, "This is a historical question as much as anything, but we were highly reluctant to use the recess appointing power for fear of the Senate's reaction and here you're the chairman of the Commerce Committee and you had no objection whatsoever." I think it was an unfair question to ask him because it obviously had not meant very much to him, and I think the very nature of my question suggested that he had fallen down on his duties, not the sort of thing I as a government relations specialist for Compaq Computer Corporation should be in the business of making somebody feel guilty or feel attacked in any way. But the precedent was made. If President Clinton was able to get by with naming a Cabinet Secretary during a brief recess of the Senate, then I'd like to think that future Presidents will be a little bit bolder in using the recess appointing power than was George Bush.

The final thing about the confirmation phase, at this point when somebody was actually confirmed by the Senate and there would be the ceremony swearing them in, my associate directors of Presidential Personnel, and occasionally I myself, would go to the little ceremonies. We did it to show solidarity and support for these people, many of whom had become our friends and compatriots because of getting them through this very lengthy process, but we also had a special purpose in mind. We wanted to listen to the remarks of that appointee after the oath was given and they stepped to the microphone to see if they said the magic words, "I want to thank President Bush for appointing me." And many of them didn't. They might just as soon thank Cabinet Secretary X for your faith and confidence, which of course we didn't always like to hear, and it would be disappointing if people having gotten a George Bush appointment would not even go so far as to give verbal thanks to the President for his faith and confidence in appointing them to that position.

Milkis: Did this tend to be people who were chosen because of pressure put on by the Cabinet Secretary against the wishes of the White House staff?

Untermeyer: That's certainly the way we'd like to remember it, but it could also be nervousness on that occasion. I will say that when I gave my little speech after being sworn in as director of Voice of America, I thanked President Bush, especially since Mrs. Bush was sitting on the stage. So I definitely followed our own medicine.

Anyway, do you want to ask me any questions about the three phases or go on to the individual Cabinets?

Milkis: A broad summary of this confirmation phase. It sounds like, with the exception of Tower, relations in the confirmation phase with Congress were pretty good, although we have to take account of how many positions were stalled, how long important positions were left vacant because relations might not have been as good. How would you characterize it, the working relationship through Mr. Waidmann through Congress?

Untermeyer: It was never outright hostility in the style of Tower because, with the exception of Clarence Thomas, there never again was a nominee as controversial as Tower. That being the case, they were the opposition and they were certainly not out to do us any favors. I don't think there were many instances of outright trying to play "gotcha," but at the same time there wasn't necessarily any great effort to pay attention to fast processing of these nominees. I will say in the Senate's defense, when the finger-pointing in response to press inquiries was most intense and the White House would say, "Well, the Senate has yet to act on this nomination," that the Senate or individual committee chairmen or majority leaders might well say, "The White House should not blame us for failing to act timely on this nomination; after all, they didn't send it over to us until just a month ago" or some other point in relatively recent history. "Why, if they took all that amount of time to get us the nomination, should they expect us to move any faster?"

That is fair enough in certain cases because, as I've indicated and confessed, it did take us a long while to go through the selection and the clearance phase, make sure these people were the right people and they had been properly cleared and all the government ethics or other ethical issues had been addressed. At the same time, it is the business of the Senate to hold hearings and to proceed with confirmations. That particular part of the confirmation process always proved the greatest hurdle, which was just to get the hearing. Sometimes a hearing of a subcommittee, let alone the committee, in order to have the person sit down there and answer questions, however brief or long it might be, just so then the nomination could go forward for a vote and referral to the floor.

Because the Senate, the whole Congress for that matter, takes a lot of recesses, there were various windows I like to describe, opening and closing of windows, when we felt we needed to get nominations quickly up in the hope of having the hearing before a certain recess began. And we might not get the person confirmed before the window slammed shut for that recess, but at least when it opened again after the recess the name would be ready for action on the floor and we might hope to get the person confirmed at that point.

There were times in which I did some missionary work on Capitol Hill, certainly answered calls from Senators first of all. The triage that I used on telephoning since all of America was frequently on my call sheets is that I would always return calls from my staff first because they needed to do my work and I figured that was the first importance. Secondly was to return the calls of my colleagues, other assistants to the President. And then Senators, because Senators are Senators and their role in the confirmation process was very important and they took themselves very seriously.

Sometimes certain Senators would be upset enough to want me to come talk to them in their offices, and I would do that at the earliest opportunity. I have always been fascinated by and fond of Congress. I'm sorry the only time I ever spent in the Congress was working as an intern for Congressman Bush back there in the '60s because I just like the atmosphere and wish I could spend more time there. So for personal pleasure as well as the need, I would go in the White House motor pool car up to the Hill and go call upon various Senators to hear their tales or to work out particular problems.

I remember a particular and ongoing swordplay, or maybe I should say fencing match, with Senator [Paul] Sarbanes, Democrat of Maryland, who was and is on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and was the chief critic of Bush administration nominees for ambassadorships, which I can go into in a little bit more detail, and I felt it was important to go sit down face-to-face with Senator Sarbanes—rather than carry on our dialogue in the press that we should do it in person.

I did the same also on ambassadorships with the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Claiborne Pell, and I'd go especially and sit down and listen to the complaints of Republican Senators who felt that we were not taking action on the wonderful people they were sending us or in general not naming enough people from their state to federal office of one sort or another.

I was less likely to do that for House members just because there are more of them and because they are not involved in the confirmation process. But clearly if Bob Michel, the House Republican leader, wanted me to come talk I would go see him, and I clearly was available to talk to any of those people whenever they were in the White House. While my schedule was very tight and was a very important tool for managing the process, nevertheless, my assistant Betty Thompson knew that if a Cabinet Secretary or an important member of Congress appeared on the second floor of the West Wing and wanted to see me, that if I was free, if I wasn't conducting an interview, that as soon as I was off the phone, because I almost always was on the phone, that I would see him and talk to him, particularly Cabinet Secretaries who I viewed as my clients in many ways, although the real client was only one, George Bush. Nevertheless I had a client relationship with Cabinet Secretaries.

I should say, although it really relates to the clearance phase, that I did spend a great deal of time on the telephone because I had to listen to a lot of people. All the people from all those different sources I mentioned who had names or complaints about the process or who otherwise wanted to empty words into my ear. It got to the point that it became physically painful to hold a piece of plastic against my ear, to the point that I think I became a pioneer in modern America among people who use hands-free ear sets, headsets, the way so many people do who have to be on the telephone today so their hands are free to use a computer.

At that time this was considered something only telephone operators did or people who were selling insurance, but I got such a headset from the White House Communications Agency and whenever my assistant told me that Senator so-and-so was on the line or Alec Courtelis or many other people I liked listening to, or more likely felt I had to listen to, I said thank you and I would put on my headset and I could then do other things with my hands. I could write on the computer, I could organize papers on my desk, I could sign letters, walk around, get some exercise you know, while listening. I hate the telephone. I've always hated the telephone. People have accused me of being very curt on the phone and to the extent they're right it's because I want every telephone conversation to be over, and in those days I had to listen, that was one of my jobs.

The amazing thing, especially at the start of the administration, was the number of people whom I simply could not talk to on the telephone because I didn't have enough time. I mentioned there was a triage system. We literally used a color-coded system whereby different types of people

were written on different colored sheets of telephone messages. I forget exactly what it was. I seem to remember that Senators were blue and White House staff was yellow and everybody else in America were on white sheets and this way I was truly able to shuffle these sheets and for my own system try to return phone calls as much as possible in and amongst meetings and interviews that I had to do. Many times, I could not get to the white sheets that had everybody else in America. At the end of the day when they were gone and I simply had to go home or get something to eat, I would often look at these sheets and I would see some of the most famous names in America, major CEOs or Governors—

Milkis: College professors. [*laughter and all talking at once*]

Young: They were off-white.

Untermeyer: Or for that matter, personal friends who I would love to talk to. And one of the advantages of being in a high visibility job, at least in the semi-obscure way I was highly visible, was that you hear from people that you've lost touch with who suddenly see your name in the newspaper or on CNN and want to get in touch. So these ordinary phone calls, on a personal basis I would want to do but I simply couldn't return, and I would walk away thinking how laughable it is that I was the only person in America who wouldn't return the phone call of the chairman of AT&T or of a major, major contributor to President Bush just because I had to spend my time returning calls from Senators or others of higher priority in my triage system.

I like to say, and it was true, that the door to my office on the second floor of the West Wing had not been refinished for a long time, and there was this strange accumulation of what looked to be like scratches on the door of this office. And I'm not sure how they got there, but figuratively speaking I could just imagine the horde of America who did want to talk to me trying to get in that door and creating all of these scratches. I was probably, after the President and Vice President, most grateful of anybody in the White House for the Secret Service, which screens people at the gate as such that nobody could get in unless I wanted them to get in except for those people like Cabinet Secretaries and members of Congress who got into the White House through somebody else's clearance and then would show up on the doorstep and I felt like I had to talk to them. It is for that reason that I never could understand the report, let's see, I'm trying to remember his name, Lindsey, who is Bill Clinton's great friend—

Milkis: Bruce?

Untermeyer: Bruce Lindsey, thank you, who was named for a period of time director of Presidential Personnel and he was reported to be with Clinton on Air Force One going to this place or that place. He was Clinton's best buddy so maybe Clinton wanted him there, but I could not understand how a director of Presidential Personnel could possibly want to leave the sanctity of that office or the White House enclave to face those state chairmen and national committee women and members of Congress and would-be ambassadors and everyone else whom I could keep at arm's length or get my staff to keep at arm's length, just for trying to preserve some order and semblance of process in my life.

As a result, for better or worse, I never flew on Air Force One, at least when it was Air Force One. I flew on the particular aircraft on the afternoon that George Bush left office and flew from Washington back to Houston, but I never went out into the country, except on very rare occasions, and when I did so it was not to deal with Presidential Personnel so much as taking time off to go do something personal.

Milkis: I find it fascinating that you didn't return the calls of somebody, the chief executive officer of AT&T, though I know that was just an example. Did you ever get any flak about that from the President or Sununu when you would not return the call of such eminent people in the country?

Untermeyer: Occasionally, and if so, it was deserved. I'm told that part of Jim Baker's success in Washington, especially in the era of answering machines, was to return people's phone calls after they had left so that you got credit for returning the phone call but you didn't have to talk to them. And I suppose I could do that, or could have done that, but I didn't want to spend any more hours than I'd already logged in a twelve-hour day, let's say, in the West Wing, especially the first year. There was always a bit of a question as to, in the declining number of hours I had left in the calendar day, which of the following things could I do? Get exercise, eat dinner, or go to sleep? I don't even think about something like getting together with friends or opening mail, those were entire irrelevancies, but I certainly couldn't do any more than one of that list and certainly not two of them or three of them, and it was in that atmosphere why it seemed to me good for my health to quit at some point. After Diana and I became engaged, then there was more reason to leave and go have dinner and not necessarily come in on weekends, although it was necessary to come in on weekends to clear away a lot of the paper that had to be answered, letters and personal notes and memos of one sort or another, just so I wouldn't start off Monday morning that much farther behind.

Yes, there were occasions when I would hear that I wasn't calling somebody back or paying closer attention. For the most part, the people to whom they would complain, such as John Sununu, were just as happy to let me handle all this problem so they would listen sympathetically and then say they'd make sure that I needed to talk to them and especially if it broke through to that level, I would talk to that person. It wasn't for any desire to insult them, it was again strictly triage.

Young: Okay, we've gotten the scratches on the door.

Untermeyer: Yes.

GW: How late are we going to go? Should we take a quick break?

Young: Let's do that.

[BREAK]

Milkis: I'd like to hear a little bit about judgeships even though—

Untermeyer: The main responsibility for judgeships belonged to Boyden Gray as White House counsel, and that was a pattern set in the Reagan administration and certainly made sense, but we must make a distinction here between so-called Article III judgeships and Article I judgeships. Article III judgeships are what people mostly think of when they talk about federal judicial appointments. They are the ones covered by Article III of the Constitution, and this concerns judges who are named by the President for lifetime appointments.

But in recent years there has gotten to be an increasing number of so-called Article I judgeships. Article I is the article of the Constitution that relates to the Congress, and these are Congressionally created special-purpose judgeships covering a variety of issues like the tax court, veterans appeals, military appeals, and several others, the most exotic being the chief justice of the high court of Samoa, which was done in conjunction with the Secretary of the Interior. Boyden Gray recognized that there was enough of a major job to be done dealing with Article III judgeships, and he oversaw a process I'll describe in a moment by which those were addressed.

He was therefore very happy to leave to me and Presidential Personnel Article I judgeships, and we handled those as we would many other types of jobs through the identical process mentioned because these judgeships are functioned in Washington, there was none of the usual kind of hassling with Senators over appointments from their states any more than would be any nominee with the usual courtesy of the Senate allowed to object to anyone from their home state whom they do not want to see in a job. But at least there would be no territorial question here since these were judges who worked in Washington.

The Article III judicial process, however, was one in which Boyden Gray convened a committee that met or was supposed to meet weekly in his office, usually, as I recall, Thursdays, for many hours. These were meetings that would begin toward the end of the day, maybe as late as 5:00 and would certainly go past 7:00 on numerous occasions. We dealt with two categories, which were district and appellate level judgeships. I'll say a quick word about the Supreme Court. This was not a committee function; there were only two Supreme Court vacancies during George Bush's term anyway. They were handled by a very special committee composed of Boyden Gray, John Sununu, and Dick Thornburgh, the Attorney General working, of course, with President Bush. You'll have to ask Boyden how he dealt with the Supreme Court nominations. I can speak, however, with great knowledge about how we dealt with the district and appellate level judgeships.

The main paperwork, sorting through names we received from the Senate and other sources, was done by a man named Murray Dickman, who was the chief political aide to Attorney General Thornburgh. Murray Dickman was a sort of Ron Kaufman clone, somebody very political, very physically energetic and active with many friends who think of him fondly, and was therefore a delightful person to work with. He could always be counted on for a wonderful anecdote or funny story about dealing with a Senator or dealing with a particular judicial appointment.

The work on filling federal judgeships was therefore divided between the Justice Department and the White House, meaning the counsel's office, with the staffer whose name I mentioned earlier, Mark Paoletta, doing whatever research could be done on the opinions of individuals being

considered for judgeships. If they were state district judges, their opinions; if they were federal district judges and were being considered for promotion to the appellate bench, their opinions there. Or their writings, which had undone many a nominee in the past. This was the sort of thing that Mark Paoletta loved to do. To underscore just how enthusiastic and devoted Mark was to the business of working on the White House staff, I'd known him for several years and when, during the transition, the time came to put together a staff, he was somebody I very much wanted to have and told an assistant to track down Mark Paoletta and to offer him a place working with us.

It turned out he was on his honeymoon in Montreal, I think, and he curtailed his honeymoon to come back to work in the transition. I'm not sure Mrs. Paoletta was very grateful about that, but it underscores just how enthusiastic he was, and just as he was with me, he was tireless working for Boyden Gray and doing research as possible on judgeships for particular judicial prospects.

There was a good deal of commonality on this committee. I don't recall any disputes or fights over particular names. We mostly were figuring out how to work this general problem regarding the United States Senate, and I mean probably as early as the George Washington administration the tradition began that U.S. Senators, particularly those from the President's party, have the primary call on federal district judgeships and we, and the Reagan administration before us, did not want to tie the hands of the President any more than this tradition had already ensured such that the Reagan administration and the Bush administration pleaded with Senators for more than one name.

Sometimes Senators complied and sometimes they sent us one name and said, "This is the one I want and you do it," which often presented a problem if that individual was not exceptionally well qualified or had major flaws of some form or another. These were what we talked about at these meetings. When I say we, the regular attendees in addition to Boyden Gray, Murray Dickman, and myself, were Fred McClure, the legislative assistant to President Bush, and Andy Card, the deputy Chief of Staff, representing John Sununu.

These meetings were very important, and if we were free from nothing more important we would always attend these because of the need to move the names. This was a slow process such that I think President Bush ended his term with many, many federal district and some appellate level judgeships pending, even those that the Senate had not delayed at the very end, as the Democrats did in 1992.

Without going into too much painful detail, I will just conclude this by saying that Boyden did not view this territorially. He wanted to have as much input, and he recognized that we each represented different types of input and could also take for special work particular problems, such as Fred McClure checking out a problem with a particular Senator or Andy Card checking the political side, or of myself trying to find a name through some other sources I might have. As a result, I think President Bush did a very fine job with his appointees and the problems, as I mentioned, almost always related to dealing with the Senate and individual Senators.

For example, we insisted, as the Reagan administration had before, that whereas the tradition was that Senators pick people for the district bench, that the President reserved the right to choose people for the appellate bench, because each of those appellate districts, or circuits as

they're called, covers several states. However, Senators would say, there's a vacancy on the fourth circuit, let's say. This is a vacancy, this seat has been held for seventy-three years by somebody from my state, therefore, this is a seat that belongs to my state and I insist on so-and-so, just the same as I might insist on somebody for a district-level judgeship. These were resisted as much as possible, knowing that Senators can cause problems, if they feel of a mind to, and often there was a shell game in process of dealing with, all right, we'll take your guy for the district bench if you stop holding up on the nomination of so-and-so for the circuit covering your state. I, however, defer to Boyden to give any further details and color on the judicial selection process.

For me, dealing with Article I judgeships was an interesting matter because these were specialty areas, many times of such specialties such as tax, that it was pure headhunting, talent-scouting type of mission more than it was trying to balance the usual kind of competition of geography and politics that came with other Presidential appointments.

Young: It was then Fred McClure who did these for this class of appointments, more or less what Waidmann was doing on the political appointments.

Untermeyer: Yes, but this was a higher level, much higher level, assistant-to-the-President-level meeting whereas—

Young: The function was much the same.

Untermeyer: Yes.

Young: Could you just clarify the question of the relevance, if any, of the Democratic majority in Congress. Were you selecting Republicans? Were you consulting, or was Fred consulting with the Republican members of the Senate?

Untermeyer: Well, always with any appointment you have to clear names so that you were not surprised by finding out that the person you were about to send up as the nominee is the old enemy of a particular Senator from that state, which could mean the death of a nomination. In the case of judgeships, the proper stance was to be in receipt of names. Sometimes we actually had to go ask for names, usually ask for more names, if we were less than thrilled with the name a Senator might send over. Then their confirmations were handled about the same as anybody else, except for the added attention that comes from dealing with lifetime appointees versus the others. But I do defer to Boyden, whose memory may be better than mine about that process, particularly toward the end, which in many recent administrations has led to many nominees for federal judgeships not being acted on by the Senate in the last year of an administration.

Young: But it was not highly partisan.

Untermeyer: There is a degree of partisanship always, but nothing for the district and circuit benches that approached the controversy for Clarence Thomas or a Supreme Court nominee.

Young: Do you have more on that? Talk about relationships?

Milkis: Yes, relationships—

Young: Then, maybe tomorrow, if not today, we can get into what you observed about the others' relationships. We're trying to get from different points of view a picture of how the White House worked and how network relationships got the jobs done.

Untermeyer: About relationships. All right, start off with the President. People often ask me, how often would you go into the Oval Office to talk to the President on nomination matters? The answer is, almost never. That in the world of Washington would usually be a confession, in fact, such a terrible confession that nobody would ever utter it—the thought that you were not seen in the Oval Office. However, I think it made the opposite case. That is, if a nomination or recommendation came forward to President Bush in the form of a memo signed by John Sununu and me, invariably he'd sign it and that person was on his or her way toward becoming an appointee. It wasn't necessary, in other words, to come into the Oval Office.

I suppose, as I've indicated, I wanted George Bush to be more interested in the daily bread of Presidential Personnel than he was, but he wasn't and as a result, if he was willing to sign those memos and approve or endorse John Sununu's and my judgment, then so much the better. When *Washingtonian* magazine and other people who like to write stories about the "most influential White House staffers" they would list people like Boyden Gray or Brent Scowcroft. I never felt hurt that they left my name off the list, because I didn't see any value in being in such articles in the first place, but it seemed clear to me that if in 99.9 percent of the cases the President was agreeing with my recommendations, then that was plenty influential for me to be, and as I said, I had enough publicity in my job that I didn't need any extra.

I did from time to time talk to President Bush on the phone. As often as not he called me. Very seldom would I call him, but those occasions did occur. Invariably when the President called, I would ask whoever was in my office at the time to clear out so that I could have a totally private conversation. That wasn't necessarily the case if somebody else I had to speak to called. I might excuse myself from an interviewee and take that call, but I certainly always made sure the President's calls were spoken in private and sometimes I could perform other business at the same time, to probe his interest in somebody or to find out whether he really cared that Senator so-and-so was mad at us for some reason or another, and he was very willing to do that. I didn't want to take excessive advantage of the fact that I could reach him on the phone or perform other business in the same call, because it seemed to me that one of the ways the Bush White House tried to work was that, knowing George Bush's tendency towards reaching out and making single-shot contacts with individuals, it was incumbent on all of us to inform our colleagues, especially the Chief of Staff, what the President was saying or doing so that people who needed to know needed to know.

But in the usual, typical White House, people are so thrilled to be the possessor of a particular bit of knowledge no one else has or a confidence the President has whispered to them, that they thrill and delight to keep that all to themselves. That wasn't very effective or useful, and as such I was perfectly content and comfortable with my relationship with the President.

As I said, I felt that he was my client, he was the one who needed to be served. It was the most clarifying and revealing of all guideposts in my tenure in this job to remember that he was the only one I was working for. I wasn't working for members of the Republican National Committee, and I wasn't working for the United States Senate, and I wasn't working for Cabinet Secretaries, and I wasn't working for myself. It was working for George Bush, and simple and obvious as it may seem, when you define the job being director of Presidential Personnel strictly in terms of how it is going to take care of what the President wants, then all those other issues fall to the left and right accordingly and take their proper perspective.

Young: Did the President get in touch with you quite frequently or not? There are some documents in the library, little notes that were typed to you, or that he would write to you—

Untermeyer: There were certainly a lot of notes, but there were more phone calls. Just as often as not the phone calls were in response to some stimulus, like he had heard from a particular Senator or family member, or Cabinet Secretary, or he would ask what have we done for so-and-so, or so-and-so tells me he's having trouble over at such-and-such a department. I mean, those kinds of things that he would glean from his many, many contacts in the course of the day he would share and I would respond.

Young: He used the phone a lot, so it is said—

Untermeyer: But also notes. I guess somebody can do a piece count as to how many I received. I certainly kept all of them, and what isn't in a note, I certainly wrote down in those spiral notebooks. In fact, I got into the habit that when I was doing interviews I would take notes in ballpoint pen. When President Bush called I would use a fountain pen, so that I could tell at a glance as I was flipping through those books when it was a Presidential call as opposed to anybody else.

Now, Vice President Quayle was a sort of client in that he was clearly the second most important member of the administration. And he was a wonderful client to have because, unlike Ronald Reagan's Vice President, he had not run for President himself and did not have a national network of friends and supporters who were expecting something out of the administration. I had very few calls or notes from Vice President Quayle about particular appointments. As often as not they were about a member of his Senate staff or a family friend who wanted to be on an advisory board, just very few and not very heavy sorts of things. And I was always eager to comply because he was the Vice President. He was, of course, the second most important member of the team and because it was so easy.

It wasn't a situation that someone like a Pendleton James or Helene von Damm faced when I used to call on behalf of the Vice President in which I was proposing somebody who was just not going to get anywhere and I was adding to their burdens. So I was very happy to talk to Vice President Quayle. I became a great admirer of his. I think anybody who worked in the administration, particularly in the White House, did, because they came to admire his superb political knowledge and political sensitivity to the point that his great service was as an interpreter of what was going on in the country and on Capitol Hill where he had spent so many years.

So I always felt that he, rather like John Sununu, got a worse reputation than he deserved. I wasn't very close at all to Vice President Quayle. I did develop good relations with some of his staff. He had a very talented staff, some of whom have gone on to distinction, like Bill Kristol as the publisher, editor-in-chief of the *Weekly Standard* and constant commentator on television, and Spence Abraham, Senator from Michigan, and one or two others of his staffers who have done very well, David McIntosh who was elected to Congress from Indiana and is running this year for Governor of Indiana, I believe. In any event, these were very fine people, and we had excellent working relations.

Milkis: So would you consult with them pretty frequently about selection and confirmation?

Untermeyer: We didn't have that much contact on appointments. They might contact me, let's see, I'm blocking out a first name, Al Hubbard who was assistant to Vice President Quayle, for I think economic issues or domestic policies, but was an old friend of Quayle's, turned out was an old friend of George W. Bush. They were classmates, I think, at Harvard Business School. He would be very interested in regulatory issues. Quayle had taken up the old Bush charge of being in charge of regulatory affairs.

Milkis: Probably competitive discounting.

Untermeyer: Exactly. As such, I might get a call from Al Hubbard on a regulatory appointment, but they were not major players when it comes to Presidential appointments. I would have been very happy to comply, but to say again, they were not, to me, what I was to Reagan's personnel chiefs at the start of his administration.

Milkis: Sometimes people like Vice President Quayle or Bill Kristol are viewed as keepers of the flame, people who represented the conservative movement in the administration. But you didn't have relationships with them like that, where they would try to lobby, even in the friendliest way?

Untermeyer: You know it is possible in conversations I just simply don't recall since there were so few, that that might have been an issue or an argument, but it wasn't his mission to try to staff the administration with people friendly to himself or to his philosophy. Walter Mondale had made that recommendation to Bush. In fact, Jim Johnson who had been Walter Mondale's executive assistant told me, during the '80-'81 transition, that George Bush should try to do exactly that, try to do what Mondale did in the Carter administration, which is to plant people friendly to him in the administration so that one day they would rise to importance, maybe in a Mondale administration. Well, as I've indicated, that wasn't so easy to do in the Reagan administration. It would have been easier for Quayle to do it but he didn't try, and I don't criticize him for that in the least.

I had mentioned my relationship to John Sununu I think pretty well. I'll just sum up again by saying I had immense regard for him, even fondness, and all the raps about Sununu being arrogant and loving to insult people and belittle them was nothing I myself ever felt, at no time.

And I'm glad, I suppose I escaped such wrath that seemed to get him into trouble with so many other people, but I never, never felt it.

I talked earlier about Boyden Gray in his role as White House counsel, in the clearance process and in judgeships. There again was a good example of somebody who was a friend of many years who started off on the Vice President's staff in 1981 and, after I married his executive assistant, our friendship became even closer to the point that nowadays, and in fact since 1992, whenever Diana and I have gone back to Washington we always stay at Boyden Gray's mansion, at 8th and Q in Georgetown, and he is the godfather to our daughter, so we keep in touch with him quite a lot and on occasion he's stayed with us in Houston. But in those days in particular we knew each other had important roles and ours was a very cooperative relationship, which it might not otherwise have been if we hadn't tried to get along and had Diana as a good reason to get along.

I had no problems with any of my other colleagues, in fact, very good relations. I might single out three in particular as those who made a great deal of difference because of their being cooperative, and they are Fred McClure, because of the importance of dealing with Capitol Hill and getting the sensitivities, of particularly the Senate, with regard to various issues.

Another was Andy Card who was sort of everybody's friend in the Bush White House, particularly if they were having problems with John Sununu. I didn't have any problems with John Sununu personally as I indicated. But he was a very busy man so sometimes it wasn't possible to talk to the Governor, so I would go and talk to Andy. Andy also served the role of being the sympathetic listener to many of my colleagues who did have active clashes of one sort or another with John Sununu and as such he performed a very valuable service. I'd known him going back to 1980. I didn't know him in the '79-'80 campaign. I met him when I was in Cambridge as an Institute of Politics fellow at Harvard and finally got to meet him and some of his cohorts in the Massachusetts legislature who were big supporters of George Bush, the most prominent other one being Paul Cellucci, who today is the Governor of Massachusetts.

The other person who was very important whom I had known going back to early 1977 in Texas was Jim Cicconi, the staff secretary, and that's because he had to physically handle the paper, the nominations in or the messages out, which dealt with the President. And it was very helpful to have him as a friend in need to alert me to certain things or to help out as the case may be.

I should say, before I get too far from talking about Andy Card that I inherited from him in 1990 a rather interesting extra assignment, which I might as well mention here as any place. That is, Andy had been the liaison for the President and therefore for the administration with Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico is a fascinating little spot, and I would say that it is impossible for me to talk about Puerto Rico for less than twenty-eight minutes [*laughter*] and I will attempt—

Milkis: That's just about the time we have left, twenty minutes.

Untermeyer: I will suffice it to say that George Bush had become—whatever—protector, promoter of Puerto Rico, going back to the 1980 primary held in Puerto Rico. Puerto Ricans woke up to the fact that there was all this press coverage about candidates for President sloshing

through knee-deep snow in New Hampshire in the early months of every Presidential election year. And somebody thought, what if we have a Presidential primary and then we'll show candidates in short sleeves and having a wonderful time with sunny skies and waving palm trees, and people might want to come and visit Puerto Rico in February. They certainly don't want to go to New Hampshire. So a Puerto Rico primary was created.

Jim Baker's strategy was that George Bush would enter every one of those primaries, and Puerto Rico was one paid a lot of attention to because it came rather early. It sort of came in between the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary. Early effort was made there by certain interesting individuals, Jeb Bush, Henry Catto, Bush's friend from Texas who had been ambassador of various sorts in the Nixon-Ford years, chief of protocol, assistant secretary of defense in the Reagan administration, a Spanish speaker, and also a man named Luís Guinot, who was from Puerto Rico and a Bush supporter, who was able to help Bush and these other people get into the Tong war politics of Puerto Rico, all divided on the question of status; that is, whether you remain a commonwealth or become a state. For the most part, but not exclusively the Republicans of Puerto Rico were statehooders, primarily the grand old man of Puerto Rican politics, Don Luís Ferré, who was a major Bush backer. So the Republicans, particularly those following in the lead of Don Luís, were for Bush and statehood and therefore Bush was for statehood.

In the Reagan administration—well, Bush won the Puerto Rican primary triumphantly, which made absolutely no difference in the politics of 1980 because he lost the New Hampshire primary a week or two later and Ronald Reagan won the nomination. But, as I said, ever after that, in 1980 George Bush became Vice President of the United States and President of Puerto Rico. During the Reagan administration, into the Bush administration, he was thought of as a special friend to Puerto Rico that the island had never had. Puerto Rico as often as not has taken advantage of the fact that it is forgotten. It is a not insignificant place with some two and a half to three million people, and yet, for the most part, there is no advocate for Puerto Rico, at least not in the executive branch, at least not until Andy Card and I took on this particular responsibility.

We never made any progress on the statehood question, or even for that matter calling a referendum on status. But Andy was the ear for all of our friends in Puerto Rico and for every other Puerto Rican politician who wanted to have an in to the White House. It got to the point in 1990 that he figured he had enough to do and he wanted to pass on this responsibility. And since having been in the Vice President's office and met many of the same people, I inherited the Puerto Rico responsibility.

It was an additional duty to Presidential Personnel that had really nothing to do with personnel, although acting on the fact that George Bush was interested on the island, he, Bush, named three prominent appointees who were from the island or had at least identification with the island as opposed to so-called New Yorkers, people who might have had their origins on the island but were really identified with New York. They were Luís Guinot, who became Ambassador to Costa Rica, and there was a gentleman whose name I forget [Enrique Méndez], who was a physician and became the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, a very big health job. And then there was, most prominently, Antonia or Toni Novello, who became surgeon-general and a marvelous star of the administration. They were all from the island, and this was a

tremendous prestige or morale booster for Puerto Rico to know that people they knew from the island were making it in mainland politics.

So that was very good for solidarity, but there still was all the day-to-day handholding and politicking involving Puerto Rico, which led to a famous sideshow of the Bush administration, certainly for me and I presume for Andy, and that is when he and I both made a trip to Puerto Rico in May of 1990. This was so I could meet these people who called Andy on the phone all the time in the hopes that they would then start calling me instead of him. Unluckily for Andy, they still kept calling him *and* they called me.

We had a profound impact on Puerto Rico during our three days. Because Puerto Rico does suffer from being neglected, to have two senior White House staffers visit the island was immense major news. We dominated the news every one of the days we were there, our pictures were everywhere, we were cartooned, we were interviewed by television, we were the subject of demonstrations pro and con. It was just a great adventure that did probably no good for the business of advancing statehood. In fact, the great block to statehood for Puerto Rico were Republican Senators who were convinced that Puerto Rico, if it became a state, would be all Democratic.

Now, I tried to explain as best I could, still without any knowledge of the future, if Puerto Rico became a state while George Bush was President that in the great tradition of the Latin world of giving respect and honor to the person who is your patrón they would have elected at least Don Luís to the U.S. Senate and several other people. They would have been very left-wing Republicans in their voting records but they would have been classified as Republicans. I could never prove that, I couldn't prove something that didn't exist so as a result I never made that particular case, and this was cleverly exploited by the then Governor of Puerto Rico, [Rafael] Hernández-Colón, who played upon the fact that there were these Republican Senators who simply did not want to have Puerto Rico in the union. He didn't want Puerto Rico to be in the union, he wanted to maintain commonwealth status, so nothing happened on my watch in charge of Puerto Rico other than I had some wonderful stories to tell. That was less than twenty-eight minutes and I still didn't tell some wonderful anecdotes, but I will resist.

Milkis: One person you haven't mentioned is Darman. Did you have very little to do with Darman?

Untermeyer: Yes, not very much to do with him. I mostly dealt with him regard to the subsidiary Presidential appointments in OMB [Office of Management and Budget], which, in particular, the position dealing with regulatory affairs—OIRA, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. That was a very important position in the Reagan administration. Wendy Gramm held it and Boyden Gray worked very closely with Wendy and Jim Miller on various regulatory matters. That position went vacant in the Bush administration, maybe always. At least, I know as of the time I left two and a half years after the start of the administration it was still vacant.

Boyden Gray can talk fulsomely on this. He considers OIRA to be one of the most critical positions in the federal government, certainly from the point of view of the White House

counsel. And he said the reason it was never filled is that Dick Darman never wanted it filled and because there were various Democratic Senators who never wanted it filled. So that was the subject of ongoing conversations with Dick Darman. For the most part he needed people on his staff, those Presidential appointees who were particularly acute in the budgetary arts and the world of dealing with the Congress on matters of the budget, all those wrangles and disputes and deficits being a well-known and well-documented part of the record of the Bush administration.

I didn't have any clashes with Dick Darman. For the most part I was happy to talk to and to concur with people he recommended for various positions, so we had no particular difficulty whatsoever. Maybe like John Sununu I was the only person who didn't have any trouble with Dick Darman, but that was our relationship.

Young: What did you observe about, it has often been said that Darman and Sununu more or less ran the domestic politics, the policy-setting of the White House. Was that, is that an impression created from the outside?

Untermeyer: I think it is because Roger Porter was certainly a significant player in all that, but, being in the blinders that I was of dealing with Presidential appointments, as often as not, those kinds of questions of matters of policy, even high politics in the White House, were things I knew about by reading the *Washington Post*, the same as any other reader on the Washington Metro. For better or worse, I was filled enough in my daily work with the need to get out production that all those sorts of things were seen only in periphery. There was a senior staff meeting every morning at 7:30; as often as not it was not newsworthy. That is, if reporters from the media had been in the room they wouldn't have learned anything more than maybe a few cracks here and there about a particular problem. So, battles, if there were, between various players were fought in other venues than the ones I happened to attend.

The senior staff meeting I might add was one in which I did not have a regular reporting slot, which was just as well. Just like I was happy not to be called one of the most influential White House staffers in the *Washingtonian*, I was just as happy not to have to report on all the various assistant secretaryships or ambassadorships, etc. And I think most of my colleagues were just as happy not to hear them themselves, so that the meeting would end and they could go to work.

Young: I was out, I must apologize, so I don't know where you got to on the list.

Untermeyer: We got down through discussing the members of the senior White House staff. I have not yet talked about Cabinet Secretaries and would be happy to do that now if you like.

First among them all was Jim Baker whom I have known for many years, going back most importantly to that famous 1977 trip to China. In fact, I was Jim Baker's roommate on one of the occasions, on evenings when we were thrown together, I seem to remember on a train that was going from Chengdu to Chungking, so I can claim that particular distinction. And I certainly supported him when he ran for attorney general in Texas [in 1978], although I had my own campaign to run so I was not an active Baker booster, but we certainly were compatriots in the cause of George Bush and I certainly saw him frequently during the Reagan years, although not

in anything more than social or in passing the corridors of the West Wing during the time I was on the Vice President's staff.

When he became Secretary of State, my primary dealings with him were over the ambassadorships, which we can hold off talking about in detail until tomorrow if you'd like, but also the other Presidential appointments at state. I've indicated that I didn't need to be instructed that whatever Jim Baker wanted Jim Baker would get, so that I never attempted to have any kind of head-butting contest with him over subcabinet appointments in the State Department. It was enough to just to thank him very much for the recommendations and proceed to process them.

He was willing to let one or two of the assistant secretary positions, one for consular affairs as I remember, be considered political appointments of the sort on which he sought our names and input and, in fact, the woman who was named Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs, Elizabeth Tamposi of New Hampshire, was somebody who was very important to John Sununu and New Hampshire and had helped President Bush, Vice President Bush at the time, win the New Hampshire primary, so she was somebody Jim Baker could accept. She became something of a celebrity at the end of the administration, at the time of "Passportgate" when Bill Clinton's passport records supposedly were rifled by the Bush campaign. A special counsel was impaneled to look into this, and after a great deal of time and expense on both sides found nothing, but Elizabeth Tamposi was in that particular job.

The other, you might say political position which existed at state was Assistant Secretary for Human Rights. Jim Baker, I think acting on recommendations probably of Republican Jewish leaders, recommended keeping a man named Richard Schifter who had been appointed by President Reagan and he did, we did, and the reason I have cause to remember that is that Dick Schifter became one of those members of our administration who endorsed Bill Clinton instead of the President, who kept him in office in 1992. And that there were a few others like this, maybe sad to say the Bush administration has the record for number of appointees who endorsed the opponent of the President when he ran for re-election. There were two or three others I could mention. Not a very proud record but it just points out why this business of political loyalty is something that you never stop worrying about, even to the very end.

Jim Baker and I maintained very friendly relations just because that's the way things were, and I frequently would go to his office, talk about ambassadorships. As we got through the ambassadorships in 1989, it wasn't necessary to go over to his office very much. I will say here, the crowning supreme Washington moment of my tenure, you might say the entire dozen years I spent in Washington, occurred one afternoon when I was in Jim Baker's inner sanctum office, sitting there with him and Margaret Tutwiler going over ambassadorships. The special line rang and Baker picked it up, knowing it was the President calling, and he listened for a moment and then handed it over and said, "It's for you." [laughter]

Young: No prouder moment.

Untermeyer: So much for that right there.

Milkis: What did he want?

Untermeyer: I think it was over some routine matter. Of course the President says, get me Chase Untermeyer, and calls are made around and when Chase Untermeyer is located in Jim Baker's office, the President doesn't have—I supposed I could have been in Katmandu as easily as Baker's office.

Dick Cheney, a man I intensely admire, was a very tough customer because of two things. One is that he is a man who gets his way as a rule, and he is the classic example of a Cabinet Secretary arriving from Capitol Hill who wanted to place people who had been on his House staff, and he succeeded in great measure. The other reason I think he got his way is he had been deputy Chief of Staff and Chief of Staff in White Houses in which the White House staff did tell the Cabinet what to do, or at least sought to keep them in on a tighter leash, and he never said anything that caused me to say, "Aha, my point is proven," but I just have to believe that Dick Cheney was intent that no White House would do unto him what he had done unto Cabinet Secretaries in his White House days.

But times are different, he was of course eminently respected by President Bush and would get his way and he was a Cabinet Secretary who on a couple of occasions was willing to take a dispute over an assistant secretaryship into the Oval Office, not content to let the Chief of Staff try to sort it out. He had done that job himself and knew that there was somebody else who worked in the White House who had a say on appointments and that's where on a couple of occasions Presidential appointments were sorted out. So my admiration for Dick Cheney, even before he was chosen as Vice Presidential nominee was intense, always, but it was certainly reinforced by dealing with him as a tough customer in the Presidential Personnel world. On that score I might say that because Dick Cheney is from Wyoming and my wife is from Wyoming where there are not too many people, I sort of had a degree of cushion of maybe his ire and anger because I was sort of a member of the family-in-law if you will, but I'm not sure about that.

Nick Brady I had known going back into the Vice Presidential years because he was a main supporter and close friend of George Bush's. I suppose I first met him during that ten-month period that he was interim Senator from New Jersey, and we saw quite a lot of him during 1982. I recall going to see him during the transition planning process. He was already appointed by President Reagan as Secretary of the Treasury, because I wanted to talk to him about how he thought appointments should be handled in the Treasury Department. He impressed upon me, as I suspect he was impressing upon everybody who sat in his office, on the need to take early and decisive action to solve the S&L crisis, one of those areas that President Bush stood up to do at great cost politically and certainly financially to the country, but something that absolutely needed to be done, and it was Nick Brady who was the primary pusher on that role.

Bob Mosbacher I had known going back to early days in the Republican Party in Houston, a delightful man, extremely charming, whom I still consider a friend, but who was right up there with Dick Cheney as being the toughest customer I had to deal with. And that's, I think, less because of him than because of his staff, pushing him on certain people for positions who had no Bush connection whatsoever and whom I suspected of being people who in later life would help those same staff members when they returned to K Street to earn a living. I don't want to accuse

them of anything illegal or illicit, but I do believe that there was less concern for George Bush's interests as for the staff's interests and winning against the White House.

Bob Mosbacher is a very competitive man and knew business and politics and sailing, and he looked upon dealing in Presidential appointments or what he especially called "my appointments" as just such a competition. He was not only intent to win but would win because of his relationship with George Bush. I'm glad to say our friendship has survived those particular days, and there are occasions in parties in Houston when Bob Mosbacher and I are with a third party and Mosbacher will sort of joke about how much I troubled him in his day and vice versa, but I'm glad to say those past battles are largely just a legend.

Elizabeth Dole is a special case. I had known her when she was assistant to President Reagan for public liaison at the start of his administration. Later she left to become Secretary of Transportation and I didn't see very much of her at all, but she, of course, was named Secretary of Labor by President Bush for reasons of her own career and record, but of course she represented solidarity with the Republican Party inasmuch as Bob Dole had been George Bush's last and biggest rival for the Republican nomination.

She was very much an advocate for people who had been important in the Bob Dole for President campaign getting positions at the Labor Department. That proved to be the most wrenching because there were lots of Bush supporters who wanted to be in the Labor Department, and here they were finding themselves shoved out by people who had been the active opponent of George Bush, perhaps even the ridiculer of George Bush in the late primaries. Ms. Dole was of course ineffably charming, proved to be extremely pleasant to talk to, but extremely difficult to work with because of this inherent clash.

Unfortunately, this is one of those clashes that got into public knowledge and it was of course a juicy story, that Dole people were getting jobs over Bush people in the Labor Department. It didn't happen in every instance, and she proved to be very cooperative on various Presidential appointments for which she didn't have a candidate. But for the most part where she did have a candidate, she would get her way. In time though, we worked very cooperatively on various appointments and that's why, despite those clashes I mentioned, she doesn't quite rank in the upper pantheon of difficult clients that I mentioned earlier.

Young: Would she have direct access to the President on these matters? The way Bob Mosbacher would?

Untermeyer: No. Nevertheless, she certainly saw him and saw Sununu and could use the many additional fronts at her command such as her husband or other people of consequence in the administration. This is normal for an administration. I don't want to make it seem like I was particularly besieged and beset or that I deserve any more sympathy than anybody else who is in the job. It is inherent in whoever is head of Presidential Personnel that these clashes will come. And if there were a seminar of anybody who has had this job in any other administration, they can substitute names for Cheney and Mosbacher and Dole with those whom they had to deal with, but that is the dynamic of it all. It does, however, strengthen my opinion that a President

should make clear to a Cabinet Secretary that in case of a tie, the White House candidate wins. But I could never get my President to issue that particular policy. [laughter]

That goes to the list, what else would you like to discuss?

Young: You've already talked about Jack Kemp, he was on the list.

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Untermeyer: Ambassadorships are the archetypal example of political appointments. People are always joking about so-and-so buying an ambassadorship or getting a pay-off or getting one for the honor of having lost an election. The fact is that there is a well-seated tradition in American government politics going back many administrations of having at least a certain number of ambassadorial appointments to be non-career. It has only been since 1924 that we've had a career Foreign Service. Before that, every Ambassador was chosen by the President on whatever grounds the President may choose, and there were certain people who could be called professional diplomats although, as often as not, they were living on family income of some sort.

But especially in the last generation or so, the basic battle has been between the career Foreign Service and the political appointees of the President over particular posts. And the question is always what percentage or what proportion will be taken by career folk versus the non-career folk? This is a never-ending battle, continued on in the Clinton administration. For as much as George Bush's ambassadorial appointments were attacked by Democrats for being wealthy donors who bought ambassadorships or people who received payoffs in some other way, Bill Clinton has certainly carried on the great tradition himself, and it seems without any pretense of the fact or disguising the fact that fundraisers and major donors have been rewarded.

But, to return to 1989, the special view that George Bush took toward ambassadorships was that he certainly was going to name people who were not career Foreign Service. At the same token he honored and admired the Foreign Service. He had actually, after all, worked with the Foreign Service in many posts along the way. He had great confidence in their skills and ability, and he didn't view the situation as a sort of battle in which the appointees of the President had to fight an entrenched Foreign Service in order to try to carry out the foreign policy of the President.

He was determined, in fact, to increase the percentage of ambassadorships held by career Foreign Service officers. At the end of the Reagan administration, the proportion was approximately 65 percent career, 35 percent non-career, and sometimes it had slipped if you will or the number of Foreign Service officers had slipped somewhere down toward 60 percent. Bush very much wanted to get it as quickly as possible to a 2/3, 1/3 split; that is 67 percent Foreign Service and eventually up to 70 percent, which was the goal, and I believe he attained it, although that was after I left Presidential Personnel. This was also a very conscious area to avoid what happened in the Reagan administration.

The Reagan administration, or at least people in it if not Ronald Reagan, did have a great deal of suspicion and hostility toward the Foreign Service and felt that the President's wishes could only be protected by a much larger number of non-career Foreign Service officers. There therefore was a constant battle, literally fought out in the Roosevelt Room of the West Wing in which delegates, you might say, of the State Department would arrive to face people from Presidential Personnel and they would wrangle over every ambassadorship, even those posts that had always gone to Foreign Service officers in dusty tropical places that you wouldn't think a Beverly Hills resident would ever want to go. But usually the White House would have a candidate and they would fight it out and out of this would come the deal. The deal would be, you get some and we get some.

This was a case in which, to many people in the conservative movement, and I say specifically in the Reagan White House, that they did not view George Shultz as an ally of the President. George Shultz was certainly emphatically conservative on foreign policy issues, but perhaps as his way of making peace within the State Department family, he fought the Foreign Service's battle in the White House over ambassadorships. So there was a great deal of feeling that the Secretary of State was not a friend when it came to these matters. I needn't go into too many details of what I heard happened in the Reagan White House, since I wasn't there, but needless to say, George Bush wanted to avoid this.

Well, it was very much possible to avoid this for the simple expedient that the Secretary of State was his close friend and former campaign manager. The Secretary of State did not want to create any kind of political antagonisms, and he didn't need any hints or lectures as to the importance of giving ambassadorships to certain people who are old friends of the President. I sat down with Jim Baker at President Bush's direction on numerous occasions, and we worked out a very simple, non-controversial formula, which I referred to as the division of the world. That was that we took the split between Foreign Service and non-Foreign Service ambassadorships that we inherited from the Reagan administration and said that all those Foreign Service officers who were serving would continue to serve, that there were to be no replacements, nobody was to be sacked from their particular post if they were a Foreign Service officer. However, those non-career Ambassadors of Ronald Reagan in whatever countries they happened to be serving, yes, they were subject to being replaced.

This meant that the only selection of countries for non-careers, you might say, just happened to be those where Ronald Reagan had non-career Ambassadors at the time. I recall retaining only one Ronald Reagan Ambassador as of 1989, a fellow named Charlie Gargano, who was a political ally of Senator [Alfonse] D'Amato of New York, and it was a way of doing a nice thing for Senator D'Amato. So Charlie Gargano stayed in Trinidad, but everybody else was subject to being replaced.

This is where I would get together names and I'd talk to President Bush and we'd have meetings in the Oval Office. And then I would meet with Jim Baker and we came up with a list of people to go into those particular spots. Whenever Baker and I signed off on anything, it almost always was agreed to by President Bush, although he did some mixing and matching. And as a result, there was no rancor between the State Department and the White House over these matters and ever after either, because we kept on the same pattern.

I should also say that we decided to do what I call “front load” the non-career ambassadorial appointments. That is, we took the ones we found from the Reagan administration and we proceeded to change them. This was another one of these public relations problems that might have been handled better if I’d had somebody from the press office working this all the time so I didn’t have to spend my time explaining and explaining. But since we were changing no Foreign Service officer Ambassadors and the only ones we were changing were non-career, when all the announcements started going out, it looked like George Bush was naming non-careers as 100 percent of his Ambassadors. And this caused great flutters and frustrations among the Foreign Service and the press that didn’t pay attention or didn’t care to pay attention to this issue. I kept saying that this was illusory, that the vast proportion of ambassadorships remained in Foreign Service hands and would continue and were in effect reappointed by George Bush. It did not come out that way and this fed the allegations, primarily raised by Senator Sarbanes of Maryland, that incompetent political hacks were being named by George Bush to various ambassadorships.

Well, there were a couple of people here and there who had some problems in the confirmation process. I only recall one, a very delightful woman named Joy Silverman from New York who had been a major fundraiser, who was named to the highly crucial post of Barbados, who actually had to have her name withdrawn because of Sarbanes’ objecting to her not being prepared for that post.

Once this particular outcry died down, in 1989, essentially the issue of ambassadorial appointments did not come up again, because we did all of the ones that mattered in 1989. There were just a very few posts that came up in the rest of my tenure and I think in the rest of the Bush administration that would take non-career Ambassadors, in which case I, or my successor Connie Horner, would sit down with Jim Baker and agree on a name and that would happen.

On the day-to-day basis, whenever any of the Foreign Service officer ambassadorships cycled up, Jim Baker, using the State Department’s own system, which incidentally is about as political as anything that might affect fundraisers or old pals of the President, but anyway, when the State Department came through with its name, it was a pass-through arrangement in which I endorsed Jim Baker’s recommendation as would be wise, over to the President who then proceeded to nominate that individual.

I should also mention that President Bush in moving toward the 67/33 and eventually 70/30 split on ambassadorships did something that truly demonstrated his support of the Foreign Service, and that is, he gave many posts that had traditionally gone to non-career Ambassadors to Foreign Service officers, the most famous example being the Court of St. James’ where Ray Seitz, who had been Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, was given that particular post, the first time ever that a Foreign Service officer had been in the spot that had gone not only to non-career people but to usually very wealthy non-career people. President Bush also had Foreign Service officers in places like Argentina, Mexico, India, Japan, and the United Nations, places that most of the time had been held by non-career people. I’m not quite sure whether George Bush got any particular credit from the Foreign Service or from people who watch these things,

but he absolutely proceeded to carry out an intention that may have been attacked along the way but ended up exactly where he wanted it.

Young: Could you talk just a bit about, I think you mentioned yesterday that when it came to positions within the State Department, assistant secretary and so forth, this was basically the Secretary of State's call. Is that correct?

Untermeyer: Yes, that's true. And Jim Baker faced a particular challenge because he had to deal with career Foreign Service officers who expected to be assistant secretaries of state also, the State Department being unique in that no career civil servant in any other department could ever imagine being given a Presidential appointment, except in the State Department where, for good reasons, career Foreign Service officers have been assistant and even under secretaries of state and filled ambassadorships.

So there was, for him, and I would defer to him to say what happened in all these cases, but my recollection is that he worked out an arrangement whereby certain of the assistant secretaryships were held by Foreign Service officers and certain were not, and the ones that were not tended to be held by the Baker coterie, people like Robert Zoellick and Robert Kimmitt and Margaret Tutwiler and various others who were closely identified with him, going back to the Treasury Department and even the White House.

Young: Of course, the deputy secretary that he chose was a career Foreign Service officer, Larry—

Untermeyer: Yes, Larry Eagleburger I think was retired, so he technically was not a Foreign Service officer at that time but it was an important one to make that case. I'm not sure Baker got that much credit because you heard and continue to hear to this day grumbles about Baker having his close-packed group that shut out the rest of the Foreign Service. I don't believe that, especially since Larry Eagleburger was there.

Young: Did Brent Scowcroft weigh in on any of these ambassadorships or did you, was he consulted there?

Untermeyer: He was in meetings and certainly gave advice from time to time, but he is a sophisticated man of White House experience so he knew that this was a political process, not a foreign policy process.

Young: I think, I'm sorry I can't point it out, but I think there was one press story to the effect that Baker at one point joined the chorus of complaints that you were hearing from the press about we need these and they're being held up, do you recall that?

Untermeyer: It's entirely possible.

Young: I think there was only one incident.

Untermeyer: It would surprise me a little bit more with him than others because I viewed it as a pass-through arrangement. If it was one of his assistant secretaryships that he chose, then the complaint would probably be more properly launched in the hands of those who were doing the clearance process because there was no further work to be done as far as my office was concerned.

Young: Well, the target was not clear. There was something in the process that was frustrating. Okay, that was the extent of the story. Anybody else on this subject of ambassadorships? You wanted also to talk about the regulatory commissions and the commissionerships?

Untermeyer: Yes, this is one of the areas that academic specialists know is extremely important and very powerful but tends to be somewhat obscure in the regular concerns or discussion over Presidential appointments. The first challenge that was faced by a new administration was to decide on chairmanships of the regulatory commissions. Ronald Reagan had been in office long enough so that I think pretty much every regulatory commission had his appointees. Some had vacancies and when that's the case, a new President can name a wholly new person to a regulatory commission seat and designate that person as the chairman. Otherwise, if those vacancies are not at hand or if you want to move faster, which was our intention, then you have to go pick and choose people from amongst those who had already been named.

Our task was made much easier by the fact that these were Ronald Reagan appointees and they shared, the same degree a Bush appointee would, an understanding of the administration's policy to deregulate and not to regulate anew if necessary when it came to issues before those commissions. I will say that I worked closely on many of these with Boyden Gray, who had been the chief deregulator for George Bush and had knowledge of many people in the regulation law community.

He exempted himself from any consideration over the Federal Communications Commission because of personal holdings in communications stocks, which meant that I pretty much had a free hand on that although there is so much competition for those particular seats that it wasn't as if I unilaterally dealt with these matters. Governor Sununu, for example, would hear from various members of the Senate on Federal Communications Commission issues and the ultimate appointee as chairman whom I don't immediately recall [Alfred Sikes], was a protégé of Senator [John] Danforth of Missouri, so Danforth was beating up on Sununu quite regularly and that's what may have inclined him to say, well, let's go with this fellow as the chair. He turned out to be highly knowledgeable and a fine chairman, but that was an example I'd say of the political process working.

Back in the transition planning period, one of the lessons of the past that Pendleton James impressed upon me was never, ever name a regulatory commissioner who is from Capitol Hill, because they will tend to view their former boss as the one who is responsible for their appointment rather than the President. And in the very odd and hard to control business of dealing with regulatory issues before these commissions, the administration is much more hamstrung than is the Congress. Members of Congress, especially the Senate, who may be biased one way or another on a particular issue or may have been reached by a lobbyist one way or

another on the issue, do not hesitate to go call up members of regulatory commissions especially if that person used to work for them. So, this was a point of wisdom well taken.

I remember Pen telling me that he had the further problem of having a brand new chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, Senator [Robert] Packwood, who in an early luncheon conversation basically said, you know all of your regulatory commissioners have to go before my committee for confirmation, and I want some of them. The implication was that if those nominees did not come across his desk, then the other nominees were not going to get any hearings and therefore not get confirmed. I'll defer to Pen and the Reagan Library as to how they actually handled that.

We had the opposite problem, which was that the Democrats controlled the Senate during the Bush administration, so we didn't necessarily have to listen to or give in to that sort of play. However, there was one celebrated incident I'll mention, because this points out how we had to deal with this question, and this was a seat on the Federal Communications Commission that was to be held by somebody not of the Republican Party. The regulatory commissions are set up by law and the law, pretty much every case that I know, says that no more than a simple majority of each regulatory commission may be held by people of the same party. It does not say conversely that the other seats must be held by members of the opposition party; they can be independents or just people who aren't registered either way in those states that have party registration.

As a result, during the Reagan administration and in ours, we would try to find people who were philosophically as closely aligned as you could hope to get from somebody called a Republican but who was not in any way identified as a Republican and could credibly be placed in a non-Republican seat.

The issue in the Federal Communications Commission during 1989 was the fact that religious conservatives felt that broadcasting was taking a very immoral tone, particularly with regard to children. They felt it was very important that somebody who was concerned about those issues be placed on the Federal Communications Commission, and we agreed. It was just that by that time there were no Republican seats on the FCC to deal with; it would have to be a non-Republican seat. It came to my attention there was a man by the name of Ervin Duggan who had been on the Johnson White House staff and who in later years had done something, I think in a private capacity, with an action group to try to get better television. From a symbolic point of view he seemed to be and was a very outstanding choice. He later became head of public broadcasting after having served on the Federal Communications Commission. A delightful person, and he seemed to be the one just perfect for that spot.

However, enter Senator [Ernest] Hollings of South Carolina, who was the Democratic chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee. He wanted his chief of staff or chief counsel, a very important member of his staff, to be named to this so-called Democratic seat on the FCC. Well, this could not be abided but it was also very hard to go up against a chairman who was very insistent on these matters and who could make the same extortion threat of his predecessors not to hold hearings on anybody else if we were so bold as to send that person forward.

Herein entered a brilliant solution, which was to come up with somebody, an individual whom Senator Hollings could not reject even over his own staffer, and Ervin Duggan filled that void in two ways. One is that he happened to be from South Carolina, and secondly, his best friend, in fact, I think the best man at his wedding, was Senator Wyche Fowler, Democrat of Georgia and, as I learned in the confirmation world and as was proven emphatically during confirmation battles over Supreme Court nominees, if you have an individual who is what I call a “personal Senator,” somebody in the Senate who is willing to make this battle his or her mission and overcome objections, that nominee has an immense advantage. And time after time if there was a particular nominee who had a friend in the Senate and the friend was willing to go fight for that individual, then confirmation was made much easier, especially if it was a controversial nomination. In this case, Ervin Duggan proved to be the solution to the problem. Senator Hollings withdrew any objection to him, and he was duly confirmed.

Another case that occurred that lives on in controversy and perhaps some embarrassment concerns that of David Kessler for the Food and Drug Administration, the FDA. Here’s something in which Boyden Gray and I, when we get together, both shake our heads that this managed to happen. It turned out that we had been approached individually by Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah on behalf of David Kessler, who had a very distinguished and prominent background. And Hatch liked him quite a lot and felt that he would be a brilliant choice for the FDA. I had no special knowledge of what the FDA was up to other than what I read in the newspapers. Boyden, however, was deeply involved in FDA issues. So I basically deferred to him on this. I’m not trying to pass the blame to him because he will own up to a good share of it anyway, but the fact is that he talked to Kessler, he felt that Kessler was a very interesting, able person, as indeed he was interesting and able, and Senator Hatch was very much for him and that was a useful thing to have.

The warning signal should have been that also greatly enthusiastic about Dr. Kessler was [Edward] Ted Kennedy, and the odd couple of Orrin Hatch and Ted Kennedy works on a lot of things, a lot of issues together and this time they combined on behalf of David Kessler. Kessler’s name was sent forward and he turned out to be not only an activist in regulatory matters, but so much one that he was retained by the Clinton administration when the change occurred. This is a great embarrassment and there is no end of ink that has been placed on pages of the *Wall Street Journal* and other publications lamenting the selection of David Kessler and using this as an example of how George Bush was of two faces when it came to regulation, that he talked deregulation but he named people like David Kessler so how could he possibly have been sincere? It was truly embarrassing, one of those things that do happen. And it is one of those things too that probably wouldn’t have happened if you could shut out the rest of the world and all your other responsibilities and duties and merely concentrate on that. But at the time, and that’s the way things always end up being, just at the time, you have to remember that Boyden was being distracted by things and I was being distracted by things, and we had what seemed to be a good candidate supported by a conservative Senator and we felt we could take that bet and it didn’t work out.

It did work out on lots of other occasions, but on this very famous one it didn’t. And clearly, if Boyden and I could rewind the clock or rerun the tape back to April or so of 1989 when that

FDA appointment was coming through, we would have looked for another candidate than David Kessler, but Kessler is the one we got.

Milkis: Why do you think? Hatch has a kind of anti-tobacco commitment, doesn't he? Is that where he and Kennedy reached a common accord on Kessler? I think that's one glitch in his conservatism. I remember, in his being from Utah.

Untermeyer: It makes sense but I suspect it makes sense because I've read a whole lot more about Kessler since we named him than before.

Young: In both of these cases, FDA and FCC, there is a powerful and diverse array of interests, including the Senate, in the work of these bodies. You mentioned the groups who felt, who were concerned with the morality of what goes over television. Certainly the communication industry, television, and it's broadening all the time, has a powerful interest in the decisions of the FCC. The same is true with Kessler in the place of the FDA, but it is a different set of interested parties and the work of the agency. I'm wondering how you felt or dealt with or what was the evidence brought to you of these constituency groups' interest in these appointments.

Untermeyer: I was certainly aware of them. I should—I won't, however, make the case that this was the sort of consideration that was as important as in other appointments, given the fact that these are very important. Somehow or another, that particular awareness or pressure wasn't so strong. Remember again that everything else was going on at the same time. You can't take anything in isolation and if that were possible and a lot more time could be spent, then the full range of views and opinion would come through. I became aware that things such as regulatory commissioner appointments, which were just part of what I had to worry about and not necessarily a very big part of what I had to worry about at the time, were the subject of endless commentary of the newsletters and columns of the press by people who pay attention to that sector of the economy and the work of that regulatory commission in particular.

Among the many things that time did not make it possible for me to do is to read the press very much to see what was happening in those comments. And if I had, I'm not sure I necessarily would have done anything differently; I just would have been more aware of the stir that was going on. I suspect that my associate directors of Presidential Personnel, who in the first cut dealt with the regulatory commissioners and various candidates, were more aware of that and they would then let me know that there seems to be a controversy about this person or this particular interest group is stirred up over this particular issue, but not anything I personally had to feel.

Young: You weren't besieged by lobbyists for these different groups personally yourself.

Untermeyer: That was the benefit of my isolation.

Milkis: I was just going to ask, did you hear mostly from Congress about it because I know Congress oversees these, particularly the independent regulatory commissions very closely.

Untermeyer: Yes, I would hear from Congress because, as I mentioned before, Congress is one of those groups that I made a point of listening to. I would not have listened to the most famous

K Street lobbyist for the drug industry or any other industry regulated by the FCC if that person called, or maybe that person did call.

Milkis: There is a message on your machine that says, do not hire David Kessler.

Young: They were neither blue nor yellow, they were the white sheets you didn't always get to.

Milkis: Did you ever give any thought to firing David Kessler, because they don't have fixed terms, the FDA, it's not independent. Was there ever any thought to doing that?

Untermeyer: I never heard discussion during the time I was there. It is a question well directed at Boyden who stayed the full four years and may have had to address that question.

Milkis: Just one other question. Did you get into firing as well as appointing, when somebody you appointed didn't turn out the way you had hoped? Were there caucuses about firing somebody that you were involved with?

Untermeyer: We're now straying from regulatory commission into the most famous incident on that that I can think of, namely the National Endowment for the Arts. On that appointment—very controversial always because arts are very controversial and the subject of passionate feelings, the way certain subjects tend to be. And, in that particular, President Bush very much wanted to have a director of National Endowment of the Arts who was outside of the East Coast arts corridor, as I came to call it. And what seemed to be the perfect solution was a very charming man named John Frohnmayer from Portland, Oregon, whose brother, David, was the attorney general of Oregon and was to run for Governor unsuccessfully. I believe today he is the President of the University of Oregon. But whatever it is, John Frohnmayer was a lawyer from Portland who was very much interested in the arts. He himself had a beautiful singing voice, and he and his wife were very much active in the arts community. He seemed to be exactly what President Bush wanted.

The other candidates were people involved in the arts in places like New York and Washington. Thinking back, it certainly would have been better to have gone with those people rather than with Frohnmayer; however, they would probably have had their own particular issues or problems, vis-à-vis the arts community, of a different nature. But Frohnmayer proved to be a classic case of a political appointee who says one thing in interviews and then goes forward after being appointed and does another.

To his great credit he admits as much in his memoir. He wrote a book called *Leaving Town Alive*, in which he goes into this. I'm extensively mentioned in the index and I seem to recall that he described the interview with me in which I was pressing him on issues of morality in art and sculpture and various other issues that were very topical at the time and for which the administration was getting assailed by religious groups and by certain people on the Hill like Senator [Jesse] Helms for not being tough enough. And therefore what was needed was a head of the National Endowment of the Arts who was going to promote traditional and widely accepted arts and not fund some of the more bizarre, extreme, and vulgar exhibitions that got into the newspaper. Frohnmayer said he absolutely agreed and he recognized that the administration was

elected by a conservative majority that expected the federal government not to support entertainment of that sort. He said in his memoir, "I wanted the job, so I lied." He did not, by any means, take steps to curb some of those more extreme grants of the National Endowment for the Arts. In fact, he became the great advocate for the freest expression of the arts outside of the realm of governmental interference and control.

Now he may have started off believing that anyway, but I also believe that the idea that you pick somebody from outside of New York and Washington in expectation that they will be any different from people from New York and Washington was disproven by the John Frohnmayer episode and that is, he may have felt all the more that he had to do and say things like that to be accepted by these very snooty, sophisticated wealthy people and in fact, I don't know this for a fact, but I could easily imagine, those kind of people sort of toying with a man from Portland, Oregon, as if to say, "You're not one of *those* people, are you? You're not going to try to cut down on women who smear chocolate on their body and put on bean sprouts as this wonderful expression of creative thinking?" And Frohnmayer was, "Oh, no, no, no. I'm not one of those people at all. Those are the troglodytes, the Neanderthals that we all oppose."

I think he was as useful to those people in the arts world as would have been somebody from New York or Boston if we had nominated one of those. Here again was the case, and I say this with all due fondness for President Bush, in which he and Mrs. Bush were taken in by charm. I mentioned that Bill Reilly at EPA was able to get by even though he was a very active regulator on environmental matters, contrary to what we thought was the policy of the administration, because Bill Reilly is intensely charming and the Bushes loved his and his wife's company and liked to have them to the family quarters.

Once John Frohnmayer was discovered and sang his lovely songs to the accompaniment of an Army pianist in the family quarters, he too had a certain degree of security, to the great frustration of people like Andy Card and myself who believe very strongly that John Frohnmayer should go, that he was the wrong choice, that we were being beaten up, properly so, I think, by people in the conservative movement who felt that we had betrayed their trust on morality and federal support of the arts and that he was, at the very least, not a team player. There was no shortage of meetings that Andy and Frohnmayer and I would have, also detailed in his book, at which he had no reason to doubt the policy of the administration was not to make grants like this and to please, when you're considering grants, remember the image and the standing of the administration among its base constituencies. And he would still go forward and do all these things.

So I believed for impertinence and insubordination alone he should have been fired, and that would have been a very good thing to do early on, possibly as early as 1989 but definitely in 1990 or '91. However, Frohnmayer survived because his charm served him well and he was fired only in about February 1992 when Pat Buchanan had become an issue and had put on television ads of grainy film of naked men cavorting or some such thing that was supposed to have been funded by the National Endowment of the Arts as an example of George Bush's betrayal of Ronald Reagan's philosophy and the conservative movement. Not that that alone was responsible for Buchanan's showing in New Hampshire, but it was a clear indication that something needed to be done, and at that point Frohnmayer was fired.

When he was fired it didn't gain Bush any standing with people of the Buchanan ilk, and it looked like what it was. It was a purely political reaction and that's all the more reason I think that Frohnmayer should have been canned a whole lot earlier. And he became yet another one of those people like Richard Schifter and Admiral Crowe and Dick Truly, the head of NASA, who in 1992 endorsed Bill Clinton for election. The Bush administration, and the Presidential Personnel director thereof says this with a certain ruefulness and regret, but the Bush administration had the distinction of having had more of its appointees endorse the opponent to the President than any prior or subsequent administration.

Karaagac: President Bush signed off on firing Frohnmayer?

Untermeyer: I was gone at the time but I'm sure he had to at that spot. Because by then the outcry became so great. But it was too late, I'm afraid.

Karaagac: Can I backtrack a little bit? It flows from regulation into the question of the National Endowment of the Arts. What was the regulatory position of the administration as you interpreted it? Was there a consistent position?

Untermeyer: I believe the position was consistent. It formed during the earliest days of the Reagan administration when Bush was the head of the task force for regulatory relief, which was to put the burden on those proposing regulations as to why they were necessary and what economic impact they would have. The assumption being that the economy is best served by fewer regulations and that the economic stimulus that the Reagan-Bush administration sought would be better served by having policies that sought to free business and industry rather than to tie greater restrictions to them. And the converse, when greater regulation means greater constriction on the economy and that was not desired.

Karaagac: Something like the regulations that were put on the securities with Nicholas Brady and that type of, in the early years, some type of regulation that was creating a safety net for a market where there were obvious problems from deregulation in the Reagan administration.

Untermeyer: I really can't comment on that. Nicholas Brady's involvement, as I recall, was after the crash of 1987, which was at the very end of the Reagan administration, and he did make certain proposals I recall, I can't remember exactly but I'm sure you're right, they were for greater supervision rather than less, but that was accepted at the time.

Young: There was the additional point that was made to exploit or make use of the natural regulatory effect of competitive market. That principle was also very much articulated as part of the regulatory philosophy. I want to get back from—

Untermeyer: A further point as to why it can be that conservative administrations that believe in deregulation end up regulating or calling for certain government activity, and I think that's because we are a democracy and we are a democracy with very active press and Congress. Issues arise in which the expectation is that the administration will *do* something. And the same is true in Congress, where a conservative Congressman will end up voting for government programs or

increases in supervision of one sort of another because of celebrated stories in the press or a growing sense that something must be done, and “doing something” in governmental context means greater restriction than less. And that’s why, in reaction to the daily news or to currents in the country, that administrations will bend to take care of the problem, else they be accused of not caring, of being antagonistic to this worthy issue or of, worse, giving their consent to evil practices that have been exposed in a newspaper article or a TV series.

Karaagac: Admittedly, everything that you’ve just said entirely corresponds with what Jim Young just said. My concern would be the political packaging of it, the marketing of it, particularly in an administration that is coming on the tail of an administration with such a strong regulatory philosophy in many ways with practices that don’t always correspond. But nonetheless, they had a strong philosophy in that way. You had mentioned something getting assailed by the *Wall Street Journal* and certainly by many conservatives who were perhaps rather addicted to this strong ideological—

Untermeyer: Well, it was a fair attack because of the inconsistency or apparent inconsistency with what was said and what was done. All I can say is that I don’t believe President Bush changed his basic philosophy on the issue, it’s just that in the context of the daily life in running an administration you have to take certain actions and perhaps others, like the *Wall Street Journal*, saw that as inconsistent and even betrayal.

Milkis: As you said yesterday, the Reagan administration had gotten beaten up pretty badly on issues like environmental protection and consumer protection, and you appointed very different kinds of people. They weren’t rabid regulators, Janet Steiger and Bill Reilly were rabid regulators, but they were very different and they were willing to push regulation ahead, albeit in a more moderate fashion. Kessler though, Kessler went way beyond the pale, but I think part of this was just a reaction, encouraged certainly by Congress’ actions to the very bad politics that had developed from it, the assaults on social regulation in the Reagan years. I think that’s what you were suggesting.

Untermeyer: I agree. Back to Frohnmayer.

Young: Back to Frohnmayer. I was just going to ask if John Sununu did not weigh in on it, you mentioned that you yourself and Andy Card felt very strongly he should go and go early.

Untermeyer: I’ve got to believe that John Sununu believed that Frohnmayer should go at least as passionately as Andy Card and I did, but I don’t recall his being directly involved in these conversations. I’m not sure that he should have been, as Chief of Staff, involved in them. I could easily see his telling Andy to go do it. But I can also see, and this is purely speculation, that when the word came back from Andy and me that Frohnmayer is impossible, he’s not going to change, we might as well fire him, that if, and this is why I speculate, if John Sununu had gone forward to President Bush with that recommendation that President Bush thanked him for his passion and may not have acted accordingly. I think it is because he knew and liked John Frohnmayer. I think perhaps the Bushes were more tolerant on issues of artistic expression than the rest of us and, if so, maybe that was driving their support for Frohnmayer.

Milkis: According to at least one of the reports in here this came up at least once in the 7:30 staff meetings, which you said you were only able to attend infrequently. Bill Kristol, who I guess would represent the Vice President at these meetings, and brought it up with typical Bill sense of irony and humor, so apparently it was important enough it came up at at least one of these staff meetings.

Untermeyer: Yes, I recall—

Milkis: I didn't want to give the impression that you were there.

Untermeyer: I regularly attended the staff meetings. What I didn't do was have a regular report for personnel.

Milkis: That's right. I'm sorry.

Untermeyer: But when the issue came up, and you're right, Bill Kristol on occasion would mention Frohnmayer, then we would talk a bit about it. I don't think there was any dispute at the senior staff table that Frohnmayer was a problem who needed fixing, but it was a classic case of putting the bell on the cat and that I think fell more to Sununu than the rest of us.

Young: George, did you have—

Edwards: No, I'm fine.

Young: This is just a reminder that we certainly don't want to neglect the final page issues but one of the things, the role of the personnel, your own job—

Untermeyer: Yes, once the great pressure of the rush was over toward the end of 1989—it did take deep into 1989 to achieve that—then we were able to do certain things or pay attention to other things that deserved greater attention than they had gotten up to then. The first thing I'd like to mention was training of Presidential nominees and sometimes appointees. This was something we did from the beginning. It was just later we were able to refine it and do it ever better. The Reagan administration had begun this and in 1984 when I was nominee, not yet appointed Assistant Secretary of the Navy, I went through one of these training sessions in which various people nominated for various posts came together in the White House, the Executive Office Building, to go through about a two-day symposium run by, of all places, the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

This, I think, was Dick Darman's doing. You wouldn't have expected the Reagan administration to pay handsome amounts of money to Harvard, but it did in this particular contract, and it was extremely valuable. But it seemed to me when several years later I was doing the transition planning and Jim Pfiffner in his book, *The Strategic Presidency*, kept talking about the importance of training, that we could do it ourselves. The Presidential Personnel office had basic knowledge of how to do these training sessions, we didn't have to spend much money at all and could run it, which we did, in addition to our daily duties.

This came to be something that we all enjoyed because this gave us further contact and friendship with the appointees themselves and also allowed us to interact with other people in the White House whom we invited to speak. We put together sessions, which were held in the Executive Office Building over two days, just like the Harvard process was, in which we had people from the press office and legislative affairs come talk. We had senior civil servants come, such as [David] Doc Cooke from the Department of Defense and Tom McFee from the Department of Health and Human Services, the highest-ranking civil servants in the two biggest departments of government, who very much enjoyed coming and talking to political appointees about how best to relate to the career folks with whom they would be working. This was very successful in every dimension.

My only regret is that I was unable to arrange for these appointees to have photo time with President Bush. Here is where the scheduling staff felt that meeting with Presidential appointees was not a very good use of the President's time, that he would be better spent receiving the national basketball or whatever those other kinds of things that are done that schedulers seem to love. And I feel like there is nothing more important a President can do than to in effect bid Godspeed to his appointees as he sends them off into a department. Presidents traditionally do that for Ambassadors who have a very similar role, to go off and represent the administration and the United States overseas. No less should be the case about sending somebody off to the Department of Commerce or the EPA or a regulatory commission of some sort. That simple thing, of having your picture taken with the President, is of great bureaucratic value, which is why U.S. Ambassadors always have farewells in the Oval Office and a photo with the President so that can go on the credenza in the embassy residence or in the Ambassador's office, just to make the point that that person is the President's man or woman overseas.

The same should apply in a domestic agency in Washington. But we were not able to do it. On one occasion I remember, we were able to get Vice President Quayle to come, have some cheese and wine with the appointees, and that was very much appreciated. And we could get people like Andy Card and maybe once we might have gotten Governor Sununu, but that was as close as it came. I think that was a great regret. I seem to remember hearing that at one point in the Reagan administration, they had a mass photo op, not a private chat with the President, but truly, to have a hundred or so appointees come to the State Floor of the White House and go through a line and have their picture taken with Ronald Reagan at that time, purely for the purpose of having the picture. Unfortunately, we weren't able to do that.

But the training was very successful. I remember incidentally, the shocked expression on the part of the, I guess, the marketing manager would be the right way to say for the Kennedy School, who could not believe that I, with my past connection with Harvard, would not want them to continue doing this. But they wanted to charge some immense amount of money, and we were able to do the same thing, I think at least as effectively, for very little money.

One project that I very much wanted to have, but it did take us into the second year before I could get started, before we could catch our breath and do it, was to create a support group for the spouses of Presidential appointees. This came directly out of my experience in the Navy Department where I came to see the value served for military families, especially naval and marine families whose menfolk go off on deployments, to have support back home in the base to

take care of all the needs the families run into during the course of those long separations and to provide entertainment and to give help and information on where to get the washing machine fixed, or what good dentist to use, or other sorts of information.

Typically, at least traditionally, the head of the spouses' association in a military group is the wife of the commanding officer. And it seemed to me that that model made a lot of sense, and it also seemed to me that that institution should exist before you bring people to Washington so that the prospective nominee or appointee, and especially the spouse, is able to call somebody and find out about schools and neighborhoods and car registration and all the many things that people who don't already live in Washington need to know before they move.

We weren't able to do that at the start of the administration. I do believe that kind of information is vital for a new administration, but we got it started as quickly as we could. With that Navy experience I mentioned and with the knowledge that it is usually the CO's wife who heads the association, I turned to the highest-ranking Navy spouse around and that was Sheila Watkins, the wife of Admiral James Watkins, the secretary of Energy. She embraced this idea with great enthusiasm because she had spent many, many years doing the same sort of thing in her husband's various assignments, so she teamed up with Patricia Carlson, who was the wife of Dick Carlson, the director of Voice of America, and they, along with some other women such I might mention, put together this organization.

We had a kickoff in the Indian Treaty Room of the Old Executive Office Building attended by Mrs. Bush. Mrs. Bush was a great supporter of this with her own history as reasons. The spouses' association was open to men as well as women. And we decided that in addition to having social events where people could meet and work up the lists of names and other information that they could provide to prospective Presidential appointees, that we would also do special things for them, to make sure that they got invited to arrival ceremonies on the South Lawn, or other kinds of open-invitation White House occasions like looking at the Christmas decorations or any other time when the White House might be available for general viewing.

What became very interesting when we made it possible for people to go see arrival ceremonies, some of the appointees themselves wanted to come. They hadn't gotten invited to ceremonies themselves and needed to have that particular contact with the administration. So that proved to be very useful.

During the 1992-'93 transition, when I was asked to confer with someone in the Clinton camp only once, I was prepared to recommend to them that they do the same thing, but, as I said, I was only consulted once and didn't get through my complete list and the individual with whom I talked, a very fine man, Richard Riley, was detached from doing Presidential Personnel to become Secretary of Education and no one else called me again. And to the extent that the Clinton administration missed doing this and creating a sense of family then that's their great loss, and I don't feel too regretful that I didn't have a chance to make that point to them.

I do believe that an administration in the White House can't do enough to create a sense of community, of teamwork in an administration, and I do regret that the scheduling apparatus in the Bush White House did not let President Bush do more of this. The supreme moment of the

year for all of us in the Reagan administration was a rally that was held in Constitution Hall on 17th Street. The formula never varied, and we loved every minute of that experience. That was when all the political appointees from Cabinet Secretaries on down to Schedule Cs were invited to come to DAR Constitution Hall on the anniversary of the inauguration, January 20th. The Cabinet would be on the stage, and certain members of the Cabinet would get up and give speeches. They tended to be the crowd-pleasing members of the Cabinet like Jeane Kirkpatrick or Jim Watt, and they would stir up the crowd and then there would be some remarks by Jim Baker, who would introduce Vice President Bush, who would come on and then would come Ronald Reagan.

And Ronald Reagan would give a wonderful speech telling about what the administration was up to and why we all needed to work together, and when he finished the Marine Band would break into the “Stars and Stripes Forever,” and then at the critical moment, the crescendo of “Stars and Stripes Forever,” a huge American flag would fall down from the ceiling of the DAR Hall. This I’m sure had been there forever, but it was the perfect theatrical touch.

Young: It was the “Star Spangled Banner.”

Untermeyer: Yes, and we would all be on our feet clapping and waving, and people would go back to their departments and agencies all pepped up for another year. These were classic Reagan events but I think they could have been done with the same effect in the Bush administration. Only tried once in the Bush administration, and it didn’t work as well. I think that may have persuaded President Bush or people around him not to do it again. So it wasn’t tried again after that one occasion, which I think was regrettable because if that didn’t work then they needed to find some other way to create this sense of getting people to the White House or to let the White House glow shine upon them.

It seems rather obvious in a way, but I think it is one of those things that isn’t consciously thought of by the President’s staff. People sort of think that the presence of the President is felt in those departments and agencies all the time. I think that’s because they’re in the White House and they feel the presence of the President all the time, and they imagine that’s the way it is everywhere. But people can get rather lonely and forgotten in certain departments and agencies, and at the end of dark corridors people wonder if they ever think of me over there in the White House. That’s why I say you can’t do enough to create that sense of community.

Karaagac: Forgive me for interrupting, but in the structure of the Bush White House whose bailiwick would that have been, who would have been at that, say, Michael Deaver role in the Bush White House?

Untermeyer: Well, there was no Michael Deaver as such. I mean, there was somebody who had the job of communications director, but this really was a matter of, I think, a higher-level decision. I confess I probably should have made a bigger point or stomped my feet or done some other kind of demonstration to say that this was more important than those who were making scheduling decisions realized, that it was important for a President to convey regularly to his appointees how much he appreciated their work and give them his views about what the policy and direction of the administration is.

Milkis: Did this ever come up at staff meetings? The need to rally the troops?

Untermeyer: No, it didn't. And I remember talking to particular individuals, to Andy Card or the Chief of Staff or Jim Cicconi, and I think they agreed intellectually that that was important, but in their world they had all these conflicting demands upon the President's time, the Foreign Minister of this country was visiting, or he needed to meet with Congressional leadership or he had to take this trip, and this was just one more thing that I figure they felt was sacrificeable because, after all, these were people who were given appointments by George Bush, they should be loyal and you take it for granted that they are, and if so, you deal with those more pressing issues. So that, I presume, was their attitude.

Continuing down the list, we in Presidential Personnel, inheriting this attitude from our predecessors in the Reagan White House, believed that one of the important things that we were doing was growing appointees for the future, what was called in the Reagan years "credentialing." We would feel that if we liked somebody and they had a great deal of talent, perhaps not senior enough to merit a Presidential appointment, that they would be placed in a deputy assistant secretary role, that is a Cabinet-level appointment rather than a White House appointment. We could many times persuade Cabinet Secretaries to accept certain individuals for non-career senior executive service jobs such as deputy assistant secretaryships and that they would be the ones ready to move into assistant secretaryships receiving Presidential appointments when those opportunities arose.

Likewise, people who were assistant secretaries could be viewed for promotion to higher levels at later times. This was an outfall more than a project of ours, our regular efforts, because we had to fill those jobs anyway, and we might as well fill them with capable people who could continue to serve. I do believe, and said publicly when I addressed appointees, that we viewed them as not only serving President Bush well, but being prepared to serve future administrations. Just like people who had served in the Nixon-Ford years had served in the Reagan administration, people in the Reagan administration served in the Bush administration, and then the Bush administration was going to be its own place for growing individuals who would be of use to future Republican Presidents.

On occasion I was called in also to take care of problem appointees. We talked about John Frohnmayer, but there were other appointees who weren't as controversial as Frohnmayer but still had difficulty getting along with their Cabinet Secretary or with their colleagues in departments and agencies. Sometimes these were people whom the Cabinet Secretary wasn't too thrilled about taking in the first place, so there was often a sense of "I told you so" when a Cabinet Secretary would drop by my office or I would go to his or her office on these people.

The fact is that not everybody is suited to Presidential appointments. I talked about the special purpose demands upon Presidential appointees who have to worry about the press and other departments and the civil service, interest groups, Congress, etc. Some people can do some of those things well and some have trouble doing any of them well, and that's one of the things that happens in a company or perhaps even in a university with personnel—people just aren't necessarily suited to their jobs and need some help.

Sometimes the help is to try to get conversations and dialogues going when people aren't communicating. That was often the case, as I said, if a Cabinet Secretary didn't particularly want an individual and was freezing the individual out. So encouraging the Cabinet Secretary to loosen up and to have greater dealings with that individual might be the solution. In some cases it would mean trying to get an outsider, a friendly outsider, to talk to this individual about ways to succeed. The Council for Excellence in Government is an organization in Washington that is made up of people who have served in high-level appointments in many, many administrations of both parties. They get together to talk about ways to improve the quality of appointees and the relationship of the civil service and various other issues, and they made themselves available to be part of this mentoring process.

On a couple of occasions we identified one of the people who were affiliated with the Council for Excellence in Government to talk to one or two assistant secretaries who might be having trouble. I think that was a good thing to do. I'm not sure to what degree it was successful, to what degree those individuals can be salvaged in the political process. At some point or another a Cabinet Secretary will give up and just say, "It's impossible, we have to move on and get somebody else," in which case then that individual would have to be fired or moved on to another particular position where there wouldn't be the same degrees of difficulty.

I do like the concept of mentoring or finding special counselors for people in this time, and it is an example truly of the degree to which Presidential Personnel, the White House in general, has an investment in these appointees and should try to help them succeed. There is some risk-taking in the interest of diversity or geographic diversity or getting somebody who is an outsider to a particular specialty area, be it environmental affairs or foreign affairs or defense. If there is some degree of learning that the individual still has to do, then I think it is a legitimate purpose or a legitimate function of Presidential Personnel to try to help that individual grow and gain from knowledge after the fact, because the price of not doing that is embarrassment when you have to let go of that individual, even if problems that have arisen in that particular department or agency break into the newspaper.

It didn't happen very much, because on the whole our appointees were very successful and didn't have problems or if they had problems they were of no special weight that required my personal attention. There was one celebrated case that did get in the press and required much more active involvement, and this was the dispute between Bruce Gelb, who was the director of the U.S. Information Agency, and Richard Carlson, who was director of Voice of America.

Dick Carlson is a very able, polished man from California who had been in broadcasting out there and became director of Voice of America in the Reagan administration. He was one of those whom we retained in a particular position. He was an old face who stayed in an old place you might say, because he was so very good. Bruce Gelb was a personal friend of President Bush, not necessarily one of his closest friends, but he was somebody he'd known going back as far as Andover days and was from New York. His brother Richard Gelb was the CEO of Bristol-Myers, and Bruce had been involved in the company business and certainly been a big Bush supporter. He very much wanted to be head of the USIA and that was an early decision to put him there. He was not a successful choice unfortunately, because he was not well suited to

government life. He was not able to get along well with people in other departments and agencies or within his own, and it was just a very uncomfortable fit.

One of those with whom he sparred was Dick Carlson. Now, Dick Carlson was more sinned against than sinning in this entire operation, but he liked to give back as much as he got from Bruce Gelb. So Dick got a certain degree of blame for keeping this feud going, which broke into the open and required some active mediation in the West Wing of the White House by David Bates and me, David Bates being the Secretary to the Cabinet, which is the function in any White House for liaison from the White House or the President out to departments and agencies.

So it fell to David and me to try and mediate this dispute. We brought the two parties together as I recall in 1990, and we sat them down and had about an hour's harangue in which they talked the issue out, and just like in marriage counseling we got them to agree to try another time and to work together and to try to move on so as to serve the administration. Well, our success was brief and Bruce Gelb and Dick Carlson got at it again, which led to a decision, about a year later, that they both had to go. As I said, Dick Carlson was the more aggrieved party in all of this, but it was clear that we couldn't leave Dick Carlson in his spot and only get rid of Bruce Gelb, since Bruce Gelb was the old friend of the President and he would have felt particularly hurt and betrayed.

So, in the classic way that things happen in government, ambassadorships were found for both of these individuals. Now, we didn't have many non-career ambassadorships available as of 1991, because of our practice of front loading. All of the really interesting, challenging sort of places were pretty much taken, either by the non-career people we named in 1989 or by the Foreign Service who had been given these interesting, challenging places in George Bush's effort to increase the number of ambassadorships held by FSOs. There was one particularly nice ambassadorship that came up on rotation, and that was Belgium. It was held by a Foreign Service officer who was retained in 1989. It was agreed by Jim Baker and me long before, that in 1991 when Belgium came up that it would take a non-career Ambassador.

There were all sorts of people who did not get to be Ambassadors in 1989 who were eager to try for Brussels, but Brussels had to be used for Bruce Gelb, and so he went there. The only other non-career ambassadorship that fell open in 1991 was the Seychelles, and Dick Carlson went to the Seychelles. The Seychelles are a beautiful, beautiful place; they are called the "country club islands." Dick and Patricia Carlson went off there and had a wonderful year. They seemed to enjoy the experience and ever after he will be known as Ambassador Carlson.

It was embarrassing to the extent that he deserved, having been director of Voice of America, to go to certainly a bigger country, a more important country, if not a nicer country, because it is hard to imagine a nicer place than the Seychelles, but that was all that was available. And he was a good trooper and even though again, I felt that he deserved better than he got, that was all we had to give him. So the decision was made, Bruce Gelb went off to Brussels and Dick Carlson to Seychelles and new people came to those spots, and since they involved me we can talk about that now or later but that decision was done. I should say that Dick Carlson stayed in Seychelles about a year, then he was headhunted to become the head of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting which was a non-government job but one for which he was eminently suited, and

he left the Seychelles and came back to Washington, served with CPB for the next five years or so.

Karaagac: There was no thought of reversing the appointment?

Untermeyer: No. In fact, there was some discussion that we should make the choice for USIA that we should have done at the beginning and that is a man named Edward Ney, who had been with Young & Rubicam, a very gifted public relations specialist, very polished man who was very well known to President Bush, and he should have been made head of the USIA. Instead, he became Ambassador to Canada. The thought was that when the Gelb–Carlson battle reached the point where we had to take dramatic action that Bruce Gelb should go to Canada and let Ney go to USIA. Unfortunately, this got into the press, and I’m told that Brian Mulroney himself, the Prime Minister, called if not George Bush then Brent Scowcroft and said, “You can’t do this. You can’t send us as Ambassador somebody who has been in the press as one of your problem cases that you’re just trying to buy them off or to pension them off by sending them to Ottawa. So please don’t do that.” What was going to be a kind of a grand swap arrangement did not work out.

Young: This relates to some words that you might want to say about your own decision to move on. We could spend a few minutes on that and perhaps break at 10:00 for a very short break and then move for the remaining time to the final page. We could do that.

Untermeyer: As of 1991, things had reached equilibrium and we could deal with Presidential appointments as they occurred on a more rational basis of actually taking proactive efforts to find people rather than merely react to résumés that came at us from the Senate or Cabinet Secretaries as we had to in 1989. When that occurred, it seemed to me that it was the right time for me to move on. As in 1983 when I left the Vice President’s staff, I felt that while White House duty can be very exciting and glamorous and filled with very special sights and sounds, nevertheless, the real satisfaction for somebody interested in government is in the departments and agencies. They are the ones who actually do the governing.

The White House sets the policy and creates the communications message and works on the politics, but it is the departments and agencies that actually do the governing. The most the White House can do is make a phone call to one of those appointees and ask, why are you doing that, or stop doing that, or you need to do this, in which case they are setting policy but they aren’t governing. It is then up to that appointee to actually wrestle with the bureaucracy or the Congress or fellow appointees in order to make something happen. Well, that’s the kind of challenge that I wanted. I also felt that having been an assistant to the President it was appropriate for me to head an operation of my own, an agency of some sort or take on some other assignment.

The problem was that we had been so thorough in doing our job that there weren’t many openings as of the time I decided to move on, and I had to kind of look around. I was interested in the idea of going overseas as an Ambassador. I should say that I’ve always been interested in foreign affairs but I’d never gotten onto what I might call the foreign affairs track, which is to go to graduate school and get a graduate degree in some aspect of national security matters and then

work on Capitol Hill as staff or possibly a think tank—the kind of traditional things that lead to people in Washington, many of whom have very famous names, to be considered part of the national security or foreign affairs group and from whom in administration after administration appointees are taken.

I had done other things. I had been involved in politics in Texas and worked with George Bush in the Vice Presidency, so I was not of that element. I remember, in 1982, '83, when I decided to leave the Vice President's staff and to go to an appointment. So I went to the fellow in the Presidential Personnel office who was in charge of the national security portfolio. This fellow treated me, I must say, no differently than if I had just been one of his other clients who came to the door. He said, "What do you want to do?" I said, "I want to be involved in national security, foreign affairs work." He said, "Ah, well then, what you need to do is go to graduate school and you need to go work on Capitol Hill and you need to work in a think tank."

Which I thought was not only impossible in the context of my life but overlooked the fact that there was some value I thought to having been with the Vice President of the United States, traveling all over the world, meeting these people and talking about these issues and hearing about these issues. But it doesn't work quite that way, so there exists the political appointment process that can make foreign policy people or national security people out of ordinary clay, and that's what happened in 1982, '83 with my going to the Navy Department and especially in 1984 when I received the appointment as assistant secretary. It looked to me like that was going to have to happen in 1991 if I was going to go do those sorts of things.

But, as I said, the openings were few. I had toyed with the idea in 1989, and the trouble there was that it was 1989, so early that I had many other things to deal with, of obtaining the de facto ambassadorship to Taiwan. This is because we don't have diplomatic relations in the formal sense with Taiwan. We do have something called the American Institute on Taiwan, which is the de facto embassy, and the director of the American Institute on Taiwan is the de facto Ambassador. This is the sort of thing that non-career people had done but it was also the sort of thing career people, China specialists, very much wanted, and this was something I toyed with promoting but I never took it to that stage because I had other things to do and it was too early for me to leave.

But along about 1991 when I was deciding it was time to go, I felt that maybe I should, if I was going to go overseas, I would have to create a place for myself and one place that very strongly appealed to me was Singapore. But that was held by the gentleman, and I'm sorry to say I forget his name at the moment, but he was the former Governor of Indiana [Robert Orr] who was very interested in promoting exports, primarily from Indiana, and he therefore was a very outstanding choice to go to Singapore, but he was there. There came open a particular post, the name of which I also forget, [the Trade and Development Program] involved with export promotion. So I concocted the grand scheme that I would call up Ambassador Orr and tell him that this opportunity existed to come back to Washington and head up export promotion. But the Ambassador, perhaps not sensing a plot was afoot, just said thank you, I'm very happy where I am. So I could not pull off that particular arrangement, and I didn't try very—

Milkis: Was this [William, III] Hudnut?

Untermeyer: No, Hudnut was not the Governor, he was the mayor of Indianapolis, and I am really sorry to say, I should remember this gentleman's name, he was a very effective Governor and Ambassador, but I am afraid we'll have to look in the books to have my refreshment there.

Then there followed the Gelb-Carlson clash leading to the reassignment of both of those people. At that time I did not actively think of Voice of America as something that I should gain from all that. In fact, when Carlson left to go to the Seychelles and I had to go fill the job of Voice of America, I did look for other candidates. I asked Marlin Fitzwater who he thought might be very good in that particular role, and I asked John Sununu for his thoughts. They came up with names of people to go there. I remember Marlin Fitzwater's recommendation was a man named Dan Howard, who had been a career Foreign Service officer, actually affiliated with U.S. Information Agency, who had been on the Reagan White House staff as the foreign policy spokesman in the press office, and that's where Marlin Fitzwater had gotten to know him.

Dan Howard was a man who was part of the Rumsfeld-Cheney group, very talented people who have been placed in key offices in several administrations, and when he was asked, as all the Reagan appointees were asked, where he wanted to go in the Bush administration, he gave us a list of various spots including ambassadorships that didn't prove possible. But Dick Cheney arranged for him to become the Under Secretary of the Navy. It wasn't one of the choices Howard had put there, but it was something he wanted and in fact this was something that Cheney fought all the way to the Oval Office over somebody who had been very active in the Bush campaign. Classic example of John Sununu and I standing up for the political person, and Cheney standing up for the person he wanted, and the President going with his Cabinet Secretary as Presidents will do.

Anyway, Dan Howard was a man who would have been a very fine director of Voice of America. I mention this because I've often wondered if he regretted turning down the offer I made to him because it was right about that same time, a little bit later in 1991, that the infamous Tailhook episode took place in Las Vegas. Dan Howard was asked by the Secretary of the Navy, Larry Garrett, to oversee the Navy's internal investigation into this. It became a worse and worse scandal, which led to the resignation of Larry Garrett, the Secretary of the Navy. Dan Howard, I know from having talked to him, was deeply hurt and felt very bad about everything that happened and whether he had let down the Secretary. It was just a very awful scene from which the Navy has only barely recovered now, and I've often wondered if maybe Dan wished he had gone to Voice of America.

If he had, then one of the opportunities for me would have been to go to the Navy Department as Under Secretary of the Navy, and I would have arrived just in time for Tailhook. So these are the ironies of the way things happen. So when I didn't get any better opportunity or better candidate for this particular opportunity at Voice of America, that's when it began to dawn on me that maybe this would be a good position. It appealed to me for certain reasons, one of which was the fact that it has a worldwide responsibility and therefore was involved in international affairs. It wasn't a foreign policy job as would be something at State Department, but it had clearly global reach. Rather like director of the Peace Corps, it is one of those positions that a generalist could fill credibly and have instantaneously worldwide responsibility that would be not exactly like

what one has in the State Department or Defense Department, but still involved enough in international affairs to be satisfying and burnish one's credentials perhaps for the future. And, as a one-time newspaper reporter, not a radio broadcaster, the journalistic mission of Voice of America made sense, plus the fact that it was a very exciting place to be in that post-Cold War period in which things like broadcasting were playing as important a role as anything else that was going on in terms of developing democracies and to stirring people's knowledge about how to succeed in forming a free press or a free society in the wake of communist rule.

So the more I thought about it, the more it made sense, and I talked to President Bush and he said that would not be a problem. And I recall an incident when Queen Elizabeth visited Washington in May of 1991. I'd just been discussing this issue with President Bush—we hadn't actually gotten to the point of saying, "Good, that's what it is"—senior staffers were invited to meet the Queen one evening at a state dinner. When my turn came in line to meet Her Majesty, President Bush said, "And Mr. Untermeyer is going to be the new director of Voice of America," to which the Queen gave her usual comment, "Oh, really?" I realized that that is the way it is going to be. My name went forward.

Now, in the world of Washington, in the world of rank-conscious White Housers, I was actually stepping down when I became director of Voice of America. And I should say for the record that the real title to which I was nominated and eventually appointed was Associate Director of the U.S. Information Agency for Broadcasting. Director of Voice of America is what the job is called in practice, just like being head of the CIA is the way the director of Central Intelligence is more commonly known, associating in both instances with the primary agency, because of the broadcasting activities that I'll describe in a moment. Technically speaking the title was not director of VOA, so much as associate director for broadcasting at USIA.

Anyway, that job is an assistant secretarial-level appointment, at least it was at the time. It's been, sorry to say, deprived of Presidential status in the Clinton years, but at that time it was a level-four assistant secretarial appointment. As an assistant to the President, I was at a level-two rank, which is equivalent to a deputy Cabinet Secretary, and there is no small amount of money difference in salary terms between those two, although in the way tax laws work I actually came out about even because White House staffers must pay District of Columbia income tax if they live there, whereas those of us from states that don't have an income tax, like Texas, who are Presidential appointees living in the District of Columbia, do not have to pay District of Columbia income tax. So going from a higher salary paying D.C. tax to a lower salary not paying D.C. tax ended up being about the same.

But the salary, and for that matter the rank, didn't matter to me very much. There were some worried, concerned faces on the part of my associates in Presidential Personnel that I was taking a step down. But clearly it was an upgrade in terms of responsibility because I would be running this agency, officially a subagency of the USIA, but as we will discuss perhaps later, in practical terms an independent agency. And it would give me all the responsibility of personnel and budgets and dealing with the Congress and dealing in international issues and the very essence of the work of the Voice of America, which appealed to me greatly. So that is why to me it would seem to make a great deal of sense, and as a result my name duly went forward to the Senate where there was some controversy, which we can discuss later.

Young: Shall we take a break and also we'll go right on as soon as we finish this with some of your reflections on the Bush White House.

[BREAK]

Young: We always try to get each of the former officials who have worked with Bush and knew him to get some reflections on this Presidency, their time in it, this is by way of hindsight, since the time will come when everyone will see the Bush administration in hindsight but will not have had an experience in it to guide them. So this is your opportunity to contribute your reflections on your time in that Presidency in its time.

Untermeyer: I mentioned earlier how I felt fated, which might be a polite way of saying trapped, into doing Presidential Personnel. I say that jocularly because it was an outstanding opportunity to contribute to an administration in a very practical way of helping to staff it and to convey a sense of service of the sort George Bush wanted. That is, he wanted his people to serve with honor, to serve with integrity, to remember that we were in it for larger purposes than ourselves, and that was the guidepost I was able to follow in terms of trying to advise him on staffing his administration.

While there were certain people along that path who stand less than in fond memory, such as the John Frohnmayers or the David Kesslers, the fact is that the vast proportion of Bush's appointees did serve exactly as he wanted, which he liked to say is to serve with honor. And it was of no small pride to be part of that. The job of Presidential Personnel famously brings with it all kinds of abuse and attacks and pressure, which I've described. I don't want to make this a case of incurring great sympathy for myself, but nevertheless it seemed that this was a role I was uniquely suited amongst people who freshly had been associated with George Bush to perform for him.

There were other positions on the White House staff that I might have filled, which would have meant a happier life and perhaps greater opportunity to be part of the headline-making events, as opposed to merely the back-page article-writing events of his administration. When those moments came and I thought it might be more wonderful to be at a summit, traveling on Air Force One, or going up for meetings with the Cabinet at Camp David, I would remind myself that I did have this inescapable past that led me to have understanding of the kind of people George Bush liked and the kind of things he believed in pursuing in government. So that was my job and I would pursue it. And as difficult and sometimes as unpleasant as occasional moments would be during the two and a half years I performed that, I did feel extremely grateful for this opportunity.

I have often referred to it as a super graduate-level course in American government because it forced me to learn about the federal government through the political appointment process in every corner and dimension. There wasn't a board or commission, an ambassadorship, a judgeship, a piece of a Cabinet department or agency I didn't find out about at some time or another in some way or another, always in the context of people to the point that, even today,

when I go to Washington but especially in those years, if I were to stand on the west front of the Capitol, looking out over the great expanse of the Mall in Washington, lined with buildings for the departments and agencies, I would look at those buildings and not see a landscape or cityscape but I would see, well, where so-and-so is serving as assistant secretary and another person is commissioner in that department and way over there in the State Department well, that's just where we placed—I would just see Washington in the context of people, which is not improper because as the old saying goes, people are policy, and the business of Washington is going about carrying out policy or otherwise dealing with it. So I was very grateful for that and for George Bush's confidence in me to do this particular role. He supported me in the bad times and gave great weight to my recommendations so that I could feel I was helping him govern.

I said yesterday that one could say that by delegation I got to carry out a major responsibility of the Presidency, not in any way and for a moment imagining that it was my job rather than his job to do that, but by delegation I could be engaged in that elemental responsibility of the Presidency to choose people for positions in the federal government. So that is why I look upon that experience very positively. It was certainly important in my life to having gone through the tension and crisis and abuse that often came to me especially in the first year, because it did allow me to focus on what was important.

What was important was taking care of George Bush's business and giving him the kind of administration that he wanted. I do believe he was a satisfied customer, and in pursuing that goal so much else became easier. I didn't have to worry about my personal public relations or whether a particular Governor or Senator was happy or whether a particular state got its proportion or amount of appointees. All those issues that filled the newspapers and filled daily discussion were unimportant. What really mattered was to serve the President. I think that was true of all my colleagues. I'm not holding myself out as anything unique, it's just that in this case with hundreds and hundred of particular decisions and particular courses of action that it was important to remember why I was doing it, and in those times it made it very possible to keep on going and not be too distracted by all the yells and hail of dead cats that came down upon me. I do believe that I was able to fulfill my mission, not only in terms of quality and honorability of the people who were appointed but also to do what the President wanted in the way of increasing the number of women and minorities.

We gave jobs to people who will be major players in future Republican administrations. Even so far, if we can look at the group surrounding Governor Bush and who arguably will be part of his administration when, if he is elected. That's something like a Josh Bolten, who is his director of policy and who may have a very significant role in a George W. Bush administration, was one of the appointees at the U.S. Trade Representative office. Josh was not someone we chose, he was insisted upon by Carla Hills, the U.S. Trade Representative. But he was somebody we got to know and certainly admire as a very smart and able man, so that he is a good example of somebody serving in a fairly junior capacity in one Bush administration who may serve in a very senior capacity in another.

It also seems to me in summing up the positive side that in looking back over those four years that the administration was scandal-free. There were the occasional problems that might come. I mentioned the Treasurer of the United States, Cathi Villalpando, was convicted of some kind of

wrongdoing, involving as I remember, a federal contract. No administration can take pride in something like that, and I'm certainly not saying we should take pride. That was the only conviction that there was. It was one too many to be sure, but at the same time it was not at all like the successor administration where special counsels were kept busy all the time looking into allegations, and in some cases the actual instances of wrongdoing.

To the extent I have any regret about serving in the role of Director of Presidential Personnel, it was that I was involved in all these hundreds of important but less dramatic issues, whereas I might have been in some other role that my colleagues got to fill. For example, when the Gulf War was going on or the buildup to it, I was in the White House and I saw limousines arriving and I saw certain people passing through corridors, but I wasn't in any of those meetings. And when the war itself came, my wife and I got to go to St. John's Church to worship with the Bushes and senior members of his administration the morning after the ground war began. That was a very special moment but it was a worship service; it wasn't a meeting in the situation room; it wasn't a meeting in the Oval Office.

Even as a mute observer, let alone a participant, I had no involvement of that whatsoever. I was busy taking care of whatever assistant secretarial appointment or regulatory commissionership needed to be dealt with. Again, that was my job, it was the one that I felt that I could do and could do almost uniquely amongst my associates. But when I visit the Bush Library and I walk through the exhibits, I'm reminded of an administration I was very proud to be part of, but almost nothing I see there is what I did. And there is almost nothing there that reflects anything that I did. Now, it's not that I was lazy and failing to do my work, but nothing that I did seems to have any kind of major historical or at least should we say exhibitional interest. My monument in the Bush Library—

Young: It's exhibitional, it's not historical. Trust me. [*laughter*]

Untermeyer: All right, very good. So there is no exhibit, nor would I ever expect there to be one on Presidential Personnel. My contribution to the Bush Library is behind the scenes, on the shelves of the Bush Library, where there is row after row and box after box of files, of people who either became or dearly wanted to become part of the Bush administration, and I'm very happy for that to be the case. And it may be like the monument to Sir Christopher Wren in St. Paul's Cathedral, the memorial to him that says, "If you seek his monument, look around you." Now I do not claim that I built any cathedral, but to the extent that we helped build an administration and that future administrations might take advantage of those people who were found, then maybe that will be the memorial, a sort of human one, since we were very much involved in human activities.

Young: When the Gulf War came or the buildup to it, you saw limousines arriving and people going up and down corridors. Did it really, did it make a difference in the way your work or the other work not connected with that was done in the White House?

Untermeyer: Very little impact. The most dramatic aspect as I recall is that there was some vigil around the clock over in Lafayette Park where someone was beating a drum twenty-four hours a day. It was like a heartbeat, and that soundtrack couldn't be escaped. It wasn't bothersome, it just

was there, and I think it was an effective reminder [of the war] on the part of the people who were keeping the vigil. But it didn't disrupt activities in any way.

Young: It didn't. So that not what was going on outside, but what was going on inside the White House where the key people were focused on an immediate and critical problem. So I am asking if during that crisis and the intense concern in national security matters and State Department matters, did not disrupt or in any way significantly alter the usual other business?

Untermeyer: That's true, we kept on going.

Young: So it was not, it did not have a noticeable effect. Because there are a number of cases on record where a crisis comes up and the President has to be dealing with it and other things are put on hold so that the President—you know, the President is missed. And it seems to me as though you're saying that things were sufficiently well organized without daily attention. I just don't think it could have happened, am I right?

Untermeyer: President Bush continued to clear his desk of paperwork at the end of every day, which means that he signed off on nominations to go to the Hill or whatever else. There was no hold-back on any of those activities, not there was necessarily a very great amount of them at that part of the administration, but there was no direct effect. I am reminded of the opening pages of Hugh Heclo's book, *A Government of Strangers*, in which he talked about all the press drama of the day Richard Nixon resigned in which the headlines said things like "American Government Stands Still as First President to Resign Leaves Office," and then in the subsequent paragraphs, he talks about, "...meanwhile over in the Department of Agriculture, fifty new regulations on crop dusting were issued, and over at the Department of Interior, a new park was announced." In other words, the business of the government didn't stop just because the President left, and clearly the work of the Bush White House and the rest of his administration didn't come to a halt because there was world crisis at hand.

Young: Because another reason for the question is that very close upon the development of the Gulf crisis was also the budget negotiations—

Untermeyer: Actually preceded it.

Young: Yes, quite preceded it, but it was still, they were still fairly close together. So those were two issues that must have been very much on the President's mind.

Untermeyer: I shouldn't forget one important instance of when my life was affected by the budget crisis, and that is that on approximately October 5, 1990, the House of Representatives, with Newt Gingrich in the van, rejected the first budget deal that had been hammered out over many months at Andrews Air Force Base. As a result of this, the President canceled what would have been some campaign appearances in the mid-term election campaign in order to stay in Washington and work with his senior staff to put together a new deal that would hopefully pass the House.

The reason this impacted on me is that he was therefore able to attend my wedding on October 6. And when he showed up it was—I can give details on that, it's a little special and surprising if the President of the United States suddenly appears at your wedding. And it was sudden because we were told he wasn't coming. The Secret Service likes surprise as a means of protection. But anyway, after the ceremony, he came around the church to wish my new bride and me well, and as I was shaking hands with him I said, "I'd like to thank Newt Gingrich for making it possible for you to be here today." [*laughter*] He was a little puzzled by what I said, but that's how it happened.

Young: A silver lining to every cloud.

Edwards: Chase, you've given us personal reflections on your time in office and the job you did, but I think it's useful if you just think about the Bush administration in history, now that we have eight years roughly since the Bush administration, and not necessarily focused on your job, but you have a lot of experience in government, a lot of experience in politics, you have the ability to be detached, you have some years' separation now. So if you could reflect on the Bush administration in history, and primarily in terms of policy of course, but any other contributions or failures that you see.

Untermeyer: Yes, well, one cannot forget that only about 38 percent of the people voted to reelect George Bush in 1992. All that I may believe very truly about the value and worth of that administration, and the quality of the people who served in it, and leadership at the top, and the monumental efforts to address problems such as the savings and loan crisis or what appeared to be an endemic budget deficit—all those things notwithstanding, the American people chose somebody else, and for a rare time in the twentieth century, fired a President.

I heard a tape of a program held at Hofstra University, I think in 1997, which was looking back over the Bush administration. Several of my colleagues appeared. I was invited but couldn't attend, but I did get a tape. And I heard Andy Card summing up; Andy with his very sensible, down-to-earth manner said, "You know, listening to everything that we have the last two days, you would think that George Bush was reelected President with 98 percent of the vote in 1992."

So in saying all the things I think that deserve to be said about the Bush administration, I can't get away from the fact that while it may be in historical terms a successful administration, it clearly was not in political terms. I can't say that people in the voting booths in 1992 went there saying, "I'm going to vote for Ross Perot or Bill Clinton to get rid of that guy Untermeyer, who made such a mess of Presidential appointments and over at Voice of America doesn't know what he's doing." I don't think there were too many people like that who were motivated to vote.

And yet I feel a certain degree of responsibility for President Bush's loss. I can't point to any particular thing. I mean, maybe the fact that people in California felt that there were not enough people from California named to office caused certain major fundraisers to be less enthusiastic about George Bush in 1992. Not just because I am talking about myself, but I discount anything of that nature flowing from the operations of the Presidential Personnel office. However, I was part of an administration that went about its daily work and was deemed to be expendable by the American voters in 1992.

It's one of the reasons why also, when I go to the Bush Library, as we're surrounded by reminders of a wonderful man and a wonderful woman and their achievements, I cannot walk through it without a sense of fast-forwarding to the end and seeing how it ended, so sadly, at least sadly to people like myself. Maybe the American people will come to have a higher view of the administration than they did in 1992. I always say that democracy means never having to say you're sorry. I don't believe that the American people owe an apology to George Bush or me or anybody else for what happened in 1992, but it's very hard, still, at this point, to look upon the administration with that degree of perspective, of saying, as I am wont to say, that it was a very fine administration reflecting the highest standards of public service and of addressing major issues, without knowing that the American people disagreed with that opinion.

Milkis: Of course there is already some very important revisionist public opinion going on about the Bush administration not [inaudible]. I was wondering from your vantage point as head of personnel, Presidential Personnel or when you were in Voice of America, if you sensed or understood that something was going very wrong politically?

Untermeyer: Oh, not any more than anyone else who would read the newspaper and be concerned about it. I do remember a lunchtime conversation sometime in 1991 with Ron Kaufman, who kept his ear to the ground in his native Massachusetts and New England in general, who told me that there was a lot of trouble politically for George Bush in New Hampshire, and it mostly revolved around the economy. That's always been a poor state and people there were suffering to some degree as of 1991 and that that could cause a problem. And I remember being concerned at that point. Remember in 1991, things were looking very good, certainly in the first half of the year. So that was a harbinger of some trouble, but that wasn't my daily need to worry about New Hampshire, so I passed on to my other responsibilities. So like anybody else, I read newspapers and saw poll results and realized that things might be coming to a close.

Edwards: Chase, you either participated in or watched closely all of George Bush's campaigns. What was different about '92 from your perspective, from what you can see? Could you sense something different in him, in others around him?

Untermeyer: Well, first of all, I was certainly a supporter of his campaigns, but I wasn't that closely involved. The closest I came was in 1979-'80 and that was just by being in the headquarters in Houston. In 1988, I wasn't involved in the campaign at all. My transition-planning project was apart physically and formally from the campaign.

But as an observer, it seemed clear to me that President Bush approached the 1992 campaign with a sense that his record was known, his ability was known, that he was willing to trust the judgment of the American people as to whether he deserved to have a second term. I think he felt that if they wanted him to serve again, he was there and available and that it wasn't necessary to engage in tricks or special public relations techniques of one sort or another to effect that result.

I say that without ever talking to him on the point. I got a sense that that was his attitude when I heard his own oral history a month ago. But I think that one of the reasons he delayed starting the

active effort of his campaign in 1992, which caused some people to wonder why, was because of just what I said, that I think he felt that his record was his record and he didn't need to campaign to create a ballyhoo about that record in order to persuade the American people to keep him or not. And I think that's a very adult attitude. It is different from the typical politician who never ceases to be worried about getting vote and taking maybe extraordinary efforts to pursue those votes.

But I, at the time, discounted the notion that he was in some way betrayed by his campaign staff. Maybe he did have a somewhat weak national campaign leadership in 1992, but after all, they couldn't affect the reality of the political landscape, such as an impression that the economy was in poor shape or that President Bush didn't care about domestic affairs, or that things were tired and listless after twelve years of Republican rule and so why not go for this saxophone player from Arkansas and see what happens. I don't think any campaign team could have overcome that, and I think that is President Bush's view as well.

Young: You had mentioned Perot as a factor in his defeat, who wasn't exactly the American people's pick.

Untermeyer: Well, that's true. There are all kinds of post-election surveys that show Ross Perot took as many votes from Bill Clinton as he did George Bush. I have to believe, considering that Bill Clinton got a majority of the vote in only Arkansas and possibly New York (I think that it was so close in New York that he may have won on a clear majority there but nowhere else) and I've got to believe that that means Ross Perot took votes away from what could be called the old Reagan-Bush coalition in sufficient numbers in sufficient states to create that result. In fact, I would say the lowest blow of a very bad day in 1992 for George Bush was the fact that, as much as he dearly loves Maine and as much as you might say he promoted the tourism industry in Maine for so many years, that he actually ran third in Maine, that Ross Perot came in second in that state, and there was a particular ill moment.

Milkis: The received wisdom on the Bush Presidency, of course, is that it had spectacular achievements in foreign policy but major disappointments in domestic policy. Now at least indirectly, as personnel director, you had an important hand in the cathedral of domestic policy, so I wonder if you feel that that received wisdom is correct or needs serious revision. What are your thoughts on that?

Untermeyer: I think it's certainly wrong in two major particulars, which is the passage or vision of the Clean Air Act and passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, two major pieces of domestic legislation. And we can't forget the effort that was repair work, rather than constructive, to undo the damage of the S & L collapse of the 1980s, requiring vast amounts of money at a time when there weren't vast amounts of money available, and requiring a fix of some immensity, the exact number of which I don't know, but tens and tens of billions of dollars just to take care of that. But he addressed the issue without which the U.S. economy would not have taken off. Japan has yet to do its financial restructuring and has suffered accordingly in a time of general prosperity such as in the United States.

His actions, controversial that they were on the budget tax questions of 1990, addressed an issue that he seemed fated to have to deal with; that is, to begin to move the U.S. government toward fiscal balance. And with great political pain he did that, and so I'd say he was extremely active on the domestic side. It may not have been his favorite area of activity; he has said that what he hated most about any domestic issues was having to wrangle and deal with Democratic leaders on Capitol Hill who were not, he felt, as devoted to the interests of the country as much as they were to partisan advantage, and as a result led to many unpleasant encounters along the way. So when people say that he wasn't interested in domestic policy, that may be literally true, but the fact is that he was very active in it, and the record in four years is as impressive as any eight-year administration that followed.

Young: There was another factor here besides the partisanship, which weighs importantly, at least in the President's mind, probably really. But there was also division appearing within the Republican Party that received a great deal of publicity, and do you think that that had something to do with the misperceptions or the conventional, the received wisdom?

Untermeyer: I think what you're referring to are the—

Young: Gingrich.

Untermeyer: Unhappiness in the part of conservatives or people who are, you might say, more motivated by social and economic concerns than foreign policy concerns. That clearly fed the vote received in 1992 by Pat Buchanan, by some people and then by Ross Perot, later, with many of the same people and a lot of others who felt that the administration was not as concerned about their daily needs and challenges as it might be others or other countries, and that is why I have often felt that the loss of Lee Atwater was felt from the point of view of coming up with the strategy for addressing those concerns.

Those people were probably going to be unhappy with George Bush sooner or later, even if the economy had not been in feeble shape or less than vigorous shape as of 1990-91. So I'm not sure that the effects would have been altered, but I do believe there would have been a different approach to handling those challenges.

Young: Would you also say, this is as an observer, that John Sununu's departure, who was at least known to be conservative as well as being George Bush's, an important person for Bush, on top of Lee Atwater's absence, then John Sununu's absence, also fed this division within the Republican Party?

Untermeyer: I don't, largely because by that time, many people in the conservative movement felt that John Sununu had become part of the problem rather than one of their allies. These people felt that he was beguiled by the devil himself, namely Dick Darman, into supporting the budget tax deal of 1990 and maybe other things as well, so that John's own reputation suffered from folks who may never be perfectly satisfied with anybody.

After all, it strikes me that many of the people we're talking about have often fed the liberals' notion of Ronald Reagan as a detached, easily manipulated individual, because they believe,

many conservatives will tell you, that Ronald Reagan was led astray from the true paths by people in his administration, which is to make the point, I think inescapably, that he was not strong enough to overcome the guile of these aides, people like Jim Baker. And if so, then they are merely making the case the press and other liberal commentators have made for years about Ronald Reagan not being fully engaged in his own administration.

I don't think that's what they intend, because they claim to be Ronald Reagan's most ardent admirers, but there's no other way to interpret it. And if they feel that way about Ronald Reagan, then they would certainly feel that way about George Bush and John Sununu and a lot of other people.

Young: Well, indeed, and it was very much a part of the political climate as the reelection approached. The President had at least two major political problems: one was the Democratic Congress and the other was a divided party of his own, which was very reminiscent historically, except they didn't have a divided Congress, of Carter's situation, he came into the nomination with Ted Kennedy and public opposition to him. So it's going to be a subject in which many people looking back at the Bush administration are going to be very interested in sorting out, and that's one reason why we get all the perspectives on this from people who really know about or saw it up close, to aid that process of replacing the received wisdom with better knowledge. As time goes on, you can expect that there will be a revision of the conventional wisdom. This happens in the case of every President.

Milkis: That's our job, isn't it?

Young: And sometimes there's revision of the revision of the revision. Conventional wisdom now about Thomas Jefferson is rather different from what it was.

Milkis: Several of them.

Young: Unfortunately, there are no oral histories of Jefferson.

Milkis: I was going to ask a quick question about the Atwater—your observation about Atwater. Given what you said, Chase, about the President being bound and determined to run on his record, this goes back a little bit to something John was implying yesterday. Do you think he would have had, Atwater would have had the President's ear in 1992, or—some of the things you said suggest he was somewhat conflicted about that '88 campaign and the way it was—

Untermeyer: Eighty-eight or '92?

Milkis: Eighty-eight, which suggests he may have wanted to run a different kind of campaign in '92 even if Atwater was there.

Untermeyer: You're right, I do believe that George Bush has been his own principal political consultant over the years. I have to believe that over the length of his political life, he has been told certain things by political experts that he always managed to trump; that is, he had been counted out many a time in his career when he lost elections or got lesser appointments or lost

Presidential primaries, and he always managed to rise to a higher level thereafter. It was a classic case of making lemonade out of lemons and it may well be that as of 1992, whether there'd been a Lee Atwater there or not, that George Bush felt that he pretty well figured out the situation and that he would campaign as he would as a—in effect saying, “Take me as I am or not at all.”

Many people, Marlin Fitzwater I think among them, believe that he was not in the best of health, that he was suffering the impacts of Graves disease, etc. President Bush himself dismisses all as extraneous considerations of health and campaign staff and TV ads and the Houston convention, and all those sorts of things. He believes that the zeitgeist was against him; that it was a national impression that the economy was in recession, which it was not technically; and that it was time for change. And that he felt was set against him regardless of who had been whispering in his ear or what things he might have done differently personally.

Milkis: I don't know if we should end on a Hegelian note, huh? *[laughter]* There is one other small thing that I'm interested in, you mentioned something of Dean Burch yesterday. We haven't heard anything about Dean Burch. I haven't heard much about him in terms of the Bush Presidency. Could you just elaborate on that ever so slightly? What was lost with Dean Burch's death, and what kind of role might he have played in his relationship with the President?

Untermeyer: I don't want to overstate it because George Bush himself said in his oral history that he felt that while he certainly felt the loss, of Lee Atwater, Dean Burch, and Mac Baldrige, that he didn't think that would have made a major difference in 1992. Dean Burch was a blunt, straight-talking Arizonan, whom George Bush had known and worked with over many, many years, and was the sort of person who not only could but would tell him things that he might not like to hear or might not be hearing at all from others.

I think George Bush was a less isolated President than most because he took so many actions to reach out to his friends, and he would use the phone constantly to call beyond the Beltway and hear what was happening. But Dean Burch was one of those people who was very much an inside-the-Beltway figure who had very good sense and would deliver his opinion. So I've got to believe that he would have given a lot of help that at the time, or at least he would have given a lot of advice at the time, which probably wasn't being heard elsewhere. Whether it would have made any major difference, I can't say.

Young: One of—this is another—I'd like to hear your comments on another piece of the, I wouldn't call it as high as received wisdom, but one of the recent theories that I read about to help explain the rise, at least in approval ratings, and fall at campaign time of the Bush fortunes, political fortunes, is that this was a President who was, and he wouldn't be the first one if this were true, but this is a theory, that this was a President whose gift for governing and personal diplomacy and all of those things was not matched by his gift at campaigning at the same time. That the demands of the two are quite different and in the sense an incumbent, as an incumbent President, he had duties and responsibilities that were difficult to mesh with the demands of a full-scale campaign. I'm not subscribing to this view, but it is one of the interpretations, early interpretations one encounters in the literature on the subject.

Untermeyer: Yes, well, George Bush is a thoroughgoing politician and he certainly engaged in the political arts no less than anybody else, but I think there is a part of him that always viewed politicking with a degree of embarrassment. A phrase he likes to use is “blowing on,” and blowing on sort of speaks to mindless, useless political palaver. He recognized that he had to do some of that, but he clearly didn’t like it, and he therefore restrained himself from doing it.

A lot has been written about how he was trained from childhood not to talk about himself. Politicians have to talk about themselves and have to brag on themselves. This was not the sort of thing that he instinctively liked to do and that has to have an impact on oratory, especially spontaneous oratory as opposed to reading from a script, and he didn’t particularly like reading from a script either. So unlike a Bill Clinton, or for that matter most any other politician you can think of running for any office from President down to county commissioner, George Bush does not like to get out and tell how wonderful he is and to say it in a way that might bring tears or laughter from the audience at will.

That is a handicap as such, but he seemed to have done quite all right notwithstanding that handicap. Perhaps he would have been better suited for a parliamentary style of government in which yes, you go campaign, but the campaign is fought on issues of merit and on the policies of the administration rather than on the quality of your TV ads or the speech you give. British politics seem to be, for better or for worse, now becoming more American in their style, so that’s less true of Great Britain, but perhaps in another era it would have been. In many ways, there are so many parallels between George Bush and John Major in terms of their governing styles that whereas Major could get by and win election in 1992 in a parliamentary system, that George Bush couldn’t quite bring off in our system and yet they both are, I’d say, practiced, experienced hands at government who are less good in the razzle-dazzle arts of modern campaigning, and who lost accordingly to people who had those skills, Bush to Clinton and Major to Tony Blair.

Young: And they each followed, Major followed Margaret Thatcher and George Bush followed Ronald Reagan.

Milkis: It’s an interesting comparison.

Young: Somewhat, you know the memory of the effect of communiqué, the great pep rally, or I wouldn’t say that Margaret Thatcher did that, she [inaudible] about it.

Untermeyer: She might have.

Young: Yes, so there was also that contrast.

Karaagac: Which leads to another parallel, and I’ll phrase the question like this. Having known George Bush for more than two decades before he became President, would you have said looking back on his Presidency that he had an identifiable, a firm identifiable place within the Republican Party, the emerging Republican Party, or was it one of constant tacking and switching to and fro to adapt to changing circumstances?

Untermeyer: He's never been an ideological man in the sense of having a fixed core of principles that he would constantly mention or bring up in debate a lot like Ronald Reagan. And as I said before, I think that's a stylistic difference between him and movement conservatives that led to their not viewing him as truly one of themselves. He very definitely came out of the larger tradition of the Republican Party, exemplified by the Nixon-Ford era, where he himself served, so he acquired a great deal of the center of gravity of that administration, of those two administrations, which had a belief of activism in the world, and dealing with, more or less coping with domestic issues and difficult times on both stages.

I've heard Dick Darman in the oral histories remind President Bush that as of the time he was President all choices were bad choices, which is what happens when you don't have much money and are running huge deficits. So it's possible to do more creative things on the foreign side, and I don't think movement conservatives or Republicans in general have any criticism or anything short of great contentment and pride over his foreign achievements. It's only in the domestic venue where controversy exists. And I think another parallel that may explain the great success which George W. Bush is having this year is that his interest, his involvement in government as a Governor has been on the domestic side and that suits the interests and orientation of the American people and especially the Republican Party this year.

Young: Well, this concludes a very interesting graduate-level course, in which we are the students and you are the teacher.

Milkis: When do we get our grades?

Young: I want to thank you very much for doing this, and any help you can give persuading your former colleagues to join in our endeavor—

Untermeyer: Oh, are they resistant?

Young: No, not necessarily, they're busy, and I understand why. But it is often—it's somewhat difficult because of the rather unusual nature of the way we go about this, it's somewhat difficult to get across the idea of what these sessions are really like and what we're after. We don't play games of "gotcha," as you know. We're not out to write stories. We're trying to think as people will think about the Bush Presidency historically, about what questions they will ask, and this is an aid to help them out. It's also an opportunity for people who knew this President well and from the inside and up close to set the record straight and give the historical record a better idea of the reality of this administration as against the image that it was seen from in the outside. So we're very dedicated to this effort. But it's not a Q & A either. So you'll know that you can lead as much as you want, and you did.

Untermeyer: Well, thank you for your efforts, I certainly enjoyed this and probably on the ride back to Houston I will think of all the things I should have said.

Milkis: There's no problem with us following up at some point, so if you've got things you didn't get on the record you want to, just let us know.

Untermeyer: And would someday anybody be interested in talking about the Voice of America?

(Too many people talking at once)

Young: I would be, yes. You had mentioned you had some interest in that.

Untermeyer: I mean it was only a seventeen-month period for me and interesting unto itself. I'm not sure even how it played out in the larger Bush administration, but a good thing to have done.